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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
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FORM 412 1M 11-43

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT

A Biographical and Critical Study

by

Marion Kingston

Date:

Approved:

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in
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1952

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Ph.D
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PREFACE

The purpose of this research has been to collect and to present some new materials relating to Claire Clairmont and her acquaintance. It represents the preliminary work for three, or perhaps four, separate studies, all simultaneously in progress and nearing completion: a full-length biography of Claire Clairmont, an edition of her letters and her journals, and a biographical study of Lady Mountcashell. The sources are nearly identical and the several works are, as this thesis should illustrate, closely inter-related.

Although my thesis has arisen out of these projects and also in a sense anticipates them, it is not intended to represent the potential form of any of them. The first chapter, a biographical study, is a skeletal biography only, designed to draw into a chronological sequence those aspects of Claire's life for which I have new materials. It is not self-sufficient, as a definitive life must be, but presupposes on the part of the reader a familiarity both with Newman Ivey White's Shelley and with Miss Grylls' Claire Clairmont. It has separated somewhat artificially into two chapters the basic progress of Claire's life and some of the significant aspects of her character and personality. In a full-length biography all information, the long-familiar as well as the recent, about her personal characteristics and the events of her life will need to be examined together in their appropriate order.

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My third chapter, which discusses Claire as a writer, is an attempt to define the corpus of her writing and to suggest the scope of her ability. It is not intended to serve as an introduction to the prospective editions of her work, but rather to answer the questions, "what has she written and what is it like?"

In preparation for this study I have attempted to discover and to examine all of the primary source material relating to Claire Clairmont. A detailed account of these manuscripts is to be found in the bibliography; so far as I know, the only significant omissions are the journals and family papers from the collection of Frau Grüwell-Clairmont which were lost in Vienna during the war and the manuscripts in the collection of the late Henry Buxton Forman, some of which were dispersed and others remained in the possession of his son, Maurice Buxton Forman of Pretoria, South Africa.

The most important of the Clairmont papers are in England, in Germany, and in Italy. In London, at 50 Albemarle Street, Sir John Murray keeps his collection of Claire's letters to Byron. He was gracious enough to allow me free access to these papers, largely unpublished, and has granted me permission to quote from them. Among the papers of Sir John Shelley-Rolls in the Bodleian are several unpublished letters

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from Charles Clairmont (incorrectly catalogued under Claire's name) to Claire and to Mary Shelley. I have found these useful, as well as the Bodleian manuscripts of the Reverend Colonel Finch. In the British Museum I studied the manuscripts of the Ashley Library, the collection of the late T. J. Wise, which include the larger part of Claire's journals. Also in the British Museum are several of Claire's letters. Much of the new material in this thesis is included through the kindness of the present heir to the Shelley family papers, Lord Abinger, of Clees Hall, Bures, Suffolk. Until very recently, only Dowden, Mrs. Marshall, and Miss Grylls have had access to this magnificent collection. It contains, among other things, the manuscript diaries of Shelley and Mary, the manuscripts of Mary's novels, most of the papers of William Godwin--including his diary and a great number of letters received by him--and a mass of correspondence to Mary Shelley and to Jane Williams Hogg, including scores of letters from such people as Lady Mountcashell and Claire Clairmont. Lord Abinger's generosity in making his collection available to the public has earned him the gratitude of all scholars interested in Shelley and his circle.

The collection of Clairmont family papers corresponding to the Shelley papers at Lord Abinger's is now in the possession of Dr. Walter Clairmont of Gauting-bei-München in Bavaria. Dr. Clairmont, who was eleven years old when Claire, his great aunt, died, remembered her clearly and took a great interest in

my work. He turned over to me more than two hundred of his family letters, including twenty-seven of Claire's, the diaries of Claire's niece Pauline Clairmont, and the family portraits in his possession. In using these materials, which had until 1948 been in the collection of Frau Cruwell-Clairmont, I have been able to reconstruct a good deal of Claire's later life.

A final collection of manuscripts of interest to biographers of Shelley and Claire Clairmont is owned by the family of Lady Mountcashell in Florence. The Signora Farina-Cini, a great-grand-daughter of Lady Mountcashell, allowed me to draw upon that collection and has invited me to return for a fuller investigation of the papers in preparation for the biography of Lady Mountcashell which will be the logical outgrowth of Appendix B of this thesis.

These, then, have been the major manuscript collections which have made my present study possible. I am particularly indebted to the special grants which have enabled me to work with these sources: the Class of 1905 Fellowship from the Alumnae Association of Mount Holyoke College, and a Pennsylvania-Delaware Fellowship from the American Association of University Women.

I have been assisted in the process of my research by the staffs of the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, the Houghton Library at Harvard University, the State Archives of Vienna, the Rare Book Collections of the University of Texas,

and the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. I cannot too warmly express my appreciation of the staff of the Library of Duke University, particularly of those responsible for the acquisition of the Godwin microfilms and of the library of Professor Guido Mazzoni.

To those individuals who generously granted me access to their private libraries and manuscript collections I am grateful indeed: Lord Abinger, Dr. Walter Clairmont, the Signora Farina-Cini, and Sir John Murray. To many of the scholars who have provided helpful suggestions and information I have made reference in my notes. In addition, I should like to thank Miss Rosalie Glynn Grylls for her most generous assistance and her continuing friendly interest in my work and Professor Lewis Patton for allowing me to consult his typescripts of the Godwin diaries, thereby saving me a vast amount of time.

My greatest debt is to Newman Ivey White, whose scholarship first attracted me to the early nineteenth century and whose influence as teacher and friend has inspired my research in that period. It was a very great privilege to have known him and to have worked under him. In the preface of his *Shelley* are to be found the guiding principles of this thesis and the work directly related to it; I wish no more for it than that it should not fall too far short of his standards.

In 1950, before this thesis had begun to take its present form, Professor Paull Franklin Baum graciously consented to undertake the direction of it. Organization and writing have

both benefited immeasurably from his able and understanding guidance, and for this imaginative supervision I am profoundly grateful. I should like also to express my gratitude to Professor William Irving for reading an early portion of the thesis and providing helpful advice and encouragement.

M. J. K.

The following short titles are used throughout the footnotes:

Abinger MSS.	The Shelley, Clairmont, and Mountcashell papers in the collection of Lord Abinger.
Ashley MSS.	The journals and reminiscences of Claire Clairmont in the Ashley Library of the British Museum.
Berg MSS.	The letters written and received by Pauline Clairmont, in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.
Clairmont MSS.	All of the papers in the possession of Dr. Walter Clairmont.
Godwin MSS.	The diaries of William Godwin and the correspondence received by him, in the possession of Lord Abinger and on microfilms in the Duke University Library.
Murray MSS.	The letters from Claire Clairmont to Byron in the possession of Sir John Murray.
Pforzheimer Variant	The revised portion of Claire Clairmont's 1814 journal, in the possession of Mr. Carl Pforzheimer.
Julian *Works*	The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley (The Julian Edition), edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols. (London and New York, 1926).
Medwin, *Revised Life of Shelley*	Thomas Medwin, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, revised edition, edited by H. Buxton Forman (London, 1913).

In transcribing from a manuscript, I have used slashes [/] to indicate passages in which Claire left alternate readings without indicating a preference. In referring to manuscript letters, I have used the abbreviation *PM.* to indicate a date supplied from a postmark, and square brackets [ ] for a date

supplied from internal evidence. I have refrained from using conventional abbreviations in my footnote references to manuscript collections, except ibid. in reference to the identical place cited in the preceding footnote. A brief history of the printing and publication of each letter is to be found in Appendix J. I have incorporated this information into the appropriate footnotes except in the case of the Abinger MSS., where the history is too complex to make this practical.

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CLAIRE CLAIRMONT

A Biographical and Critical Study

Chapter I

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Much has been written about the Claire Clairmont who was "Mother of Byron's Allegra" and the Claire "who saw Shelley plain." One more biographical study, particularly after the very readable life by Miss Grylls, can be justified only by the presentation of new material. The following study does not attempt a full length biography of Claire. It enters upon no detailed re-examination of those aspects of her life for which no new evidence has come to light. It does, on the other hand, attempt to fill in those areas in which the evidence has not yet been adequately displayed and whenever possible to place the emphasis on materials which will further an understanding of the major figures of the period.

Throughout the eighty-one years of her life Claire herself continued to appeal to the imagination of those who knew her as well as those who merely knew of her. Henry James, in 1887,

heard of Captain Silsbee and his attempts to insinuate himself into Claire's household in the hope of obtaining her Shelley papers at her death. Within a year of the first time James heard this story, he had ready for publication The Aspern Papers, an imaginary account based directly on the story of Silsbee and his plot.[1] Today the interest in Claire Clairmont and her associates continues, perpetuated not only in the scholarly and academic world but in the realm of the novel, the motion picture, and the radio play.

Related to the biography of Claire Clairmont are the lives of the people with whom she was associated. Unquestionably many of these individuals are interesting today primarily because they were also associated with Shelley and Byron. Thus abbreviated biographical sketches have been incorporated wherever they are of significance in Claire's life or in Byron's or Shelley's; Shelley's circle in particular included few seccatori, and a study of its members, even in the long denouement after 1822, increases one's familiarity with many a man and woman interesting in his own right. Some of these--Mary Shelley, Trelawny, Jane Williams, Lady Mountcashell--are

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[1] For a discussion of the genesis of this nouvelle, see The Notebooks of Henry James, edited by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1947), pp. 71-73, and Henry James, The Aspern Papers (New York, 1922), vol. XII of the New York Edition, preface, pp. v-xiv. The struggle for possession of the Clairmont papers is discussed in Appendix I. The chief value, in the last analysis, of William Graham's Last Links with Byron, Shelley, and Keats (London, 1898) may well be the abundant evidence it presents of the strength of Claire's romantic appeal, even in extreme old age.

seen with particular clarity through the medium of their relationships with Claire Clairmont. Although increasing age sometimes weakened and sometimes exaggerated the characteristics of the people Shelley and Byron had known, they remained throughout their lives, nonetheless, the same persons, their essential charms and eccentricities, their jealousies and loyalties basically unchanged. "People never alter--we are still the same," wrote Trelawny to Claire in 1869.[2]

i

Despite the tremendous quantities of manuscript material, both by and about herself, which Claire Clairmont left to the world at her death, part of her legacy to her biographers was a handful of apparently impenetrable mysteries, largely self-perpetuated. The first of these is the mystery of her parentage. The most that is known is that Charles Gaulis Clairmont, merchant and rentier, died during a sojourn in Hamburg in 1798, the same year in which his daughter, Clara Mary Jane,

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[2] Letters of Edward John Trelawny, edited by H. Buxton Forman (London, 1910), p. 218.

was born.[3] His wife, Mary Jane, was left with the new-born baby and a three-year-old son, who had been born in Bristol on 4 June 1795 and was called after his father Charles Gaulis.[4]

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[3] Dossier Clairmont, Vienna State Archives (still intact in 1949 after several war-time movings). R. Glynn Grylls calls Claire "the perfectly legitimate daughter of the practical Mrs. Godwin and her Swiss merchant husband." --*Claire Clairmont: Mother of Byron's Allegra* (London, 1939), p. 11. That Claire had Swiss ancestry is clear from a letter to Byron in which she says: "Think of me in Switzerland: the land of my ancestors. Like my native mountains I am tranquil and as they are tranquil so is my affection." --MS letter in the possession of Sir John Murray, published in Grylls, *op. cit.*, p. 61. This collection of Clairmont-Byron letters is cited hereafter as Murray MSS. Claire's Swiss journal of 1814 contains three crossed-out passages in contexts of praise for the country. The only one which I have been able to decipher refers to Switzerland "which I love to consider my own country" (14 August 1814). On 29 August 1814 one of her "very nice" travelling companions informed her of her relations in Geneva. --Unpublished journals in the British Museum, cited hereafter as Ashley MSS. It is impossible to tell from this evidence whether the Swiss connection was on the side of the Clairmonts or the Devereaux (Claire's mother's family). Family tradition recalls that Charles Clairmont, Senior, came to England from France by way of Jersey. --Herbert Huscher, "Charles und Claire Clairmont," *Englische Studien*, [ca. 1945], p. 56n.

[4] Dossier Clairmont. See genealogical table, Appendix L. The legality of Mrs. Clairmont's marriage has been questioned. Crabb Robinson reported the following bit of gossip on 24 August 1819: "It is said that she was never married, but was kept and abandoned by her keeper, or, rather, left destitute at his death. She was relieved by a charitable subscription, and taken out of prison; on which she came up to town with her young children, met with Godwin at Somers Town, and became certainly towards him a meritorious wife, though towards others I doubt both her sincerity and her integrity. . . ." --*Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers* (London, 1938), I, 235. On 9 June 1871, Claire's niece Pauline wrote in her journal: "One morning she [Claire] wanted to make out that my Father and Mother were never married & that we were illegitimate, counting upon my ignorance or generosity in not returning the compliment concerning *her* Mother--She was right in counting on my generosity--for I have a great horror of

In 1801 Mrs. Clairmont was living with her baby girl (Charles was at that time away, perhaps even then at school) next door to William Godwin in Somers Town, and on May 5 he announced in his diary, "Meet Mrs. Clairmont."[5] Whether or not the story of her overture to him is true,[6] by September Godwin had taken the initiative in the courtship and reminded his friend Charles Lamb of nothing so much as Malvolio: "The Professor (Godwin) is COURTING. The Lady is a Widow[7] with green spectacles and one child, and the Professor is grown

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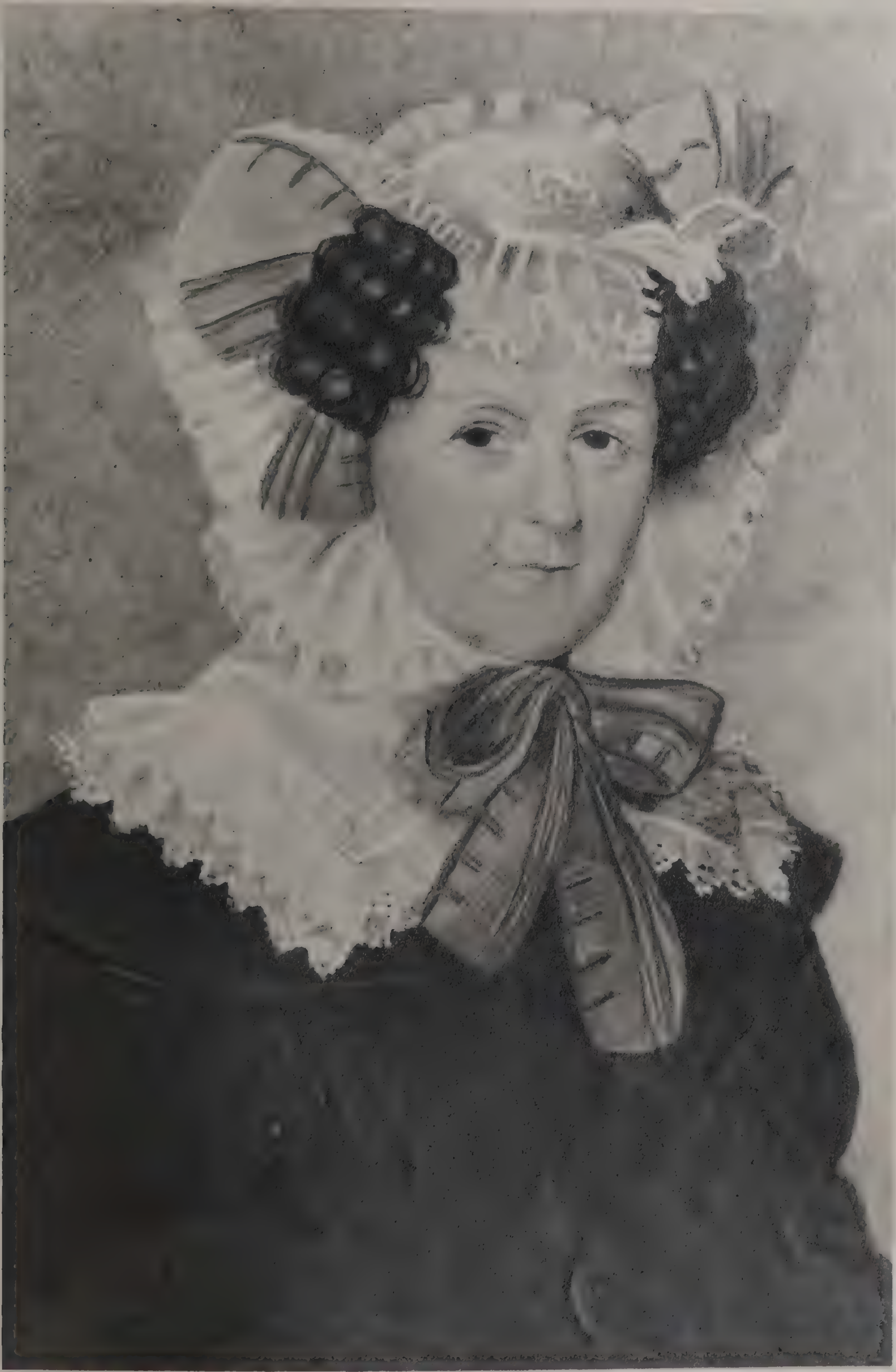
kicking & slandering the dead." --Unpublished journals in the possession of Mr. Walter Clairmont, cited hereafter as Clairmont MSS. Neither of these two scraps of gossip is conclusive evidence of the illegitimacy of Charles and Claire Clairmont, but if the story were proved true, one could understand the appeal to Godwin in Mrs. Clairmont's pathetic tale, so similar in its outline to the story of Mary Wollstonecraft's relations with Gilbert Imlay. Claire's ready sympathy with the Shelleyan view of marriage (similar to that of Mary Wollstonecraft, who considered herself married to Imlay) and her later obsession with the advantages of illegitimacy (see below Chapter II, pp. 201-203) are more easily understandable in the light of this possibility than they might otherwise appear.

[5] William Godwin, unpublished diaries in the possession of Lord Abinger, cited hereafter as Godwin MSS.

[6] See C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries (London, 1876) II, 58.

[7] "A very disgusting woman" [Lamb's note].

Mary Jane Clairmont Godwin



quite juvenile."[8] On 21 December 1801 the marriage vows were said: Godwin had at last, after two frustrating rejections by his favorite candidates for the post, succeeded in finding a step-mother for his Fanny and Mary.

Whatever her history, the second Mrs. Godwin was not entirely the common sort of woman that she has been made out. Godwin worried off and on that he was not able to give her the kind of life to which women of the class to which she was born were accustomed--the pleasure-jaunts for sea-bathing and the excursions to watering places.[9] Aaron Burr reported her a "sensible, amiable woman,"[10] and Harriet Shelley's first impression was decidedly favorable:

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[8] Charles Lamb, *The Letters of Charles Lamb to which are added those of his sister Mary Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas (London, 1935), I, 273. Mrs. Godwin was never more wrong than when she considered Mary Shelley her greatest enemy. Top candidate for that position was Charles Lamb. His letters are filled with disgust at her gossiping and inquisitiveness, her staying on too late at his house, her general disagreeableness. "I will be buried with this inscription over me:--'Here lies C.L., the woman-hater'--I mean that hated ONE WOMAN: for the rest, God bless them."--*Ibid*., II, 70. "That damn'd infernal bitch Mrs. Godwin" found a certain painful immortality as Priscilla Pry in the "Lepus" papers. See for instance "Tom Pry's Wife," *The New Times*, 28 February 1825.

[9] Paul, *op. cit*., II, 129-130.

[10] Aaron Burr, *Correspondence of Aaron Burr and His Daughter Theodosia*, edited with a preface by Mark Van Doren (New York, 1929), p. 264.

> The many trials that Mrs. Godwin has had to encounter makes [*sic*] me very much inclined to believe her a woman of great fortitude and unyielding temper of mind. There is a very great sweetness marked in her countenance. In many instances she has shown herself a woman of great magnanimity and independence of character.[11]

One wishes that Harriet had been more explicit in her last statement, but her favorable impression was not to be permanent, since Shelley finally had to tell Godwin that Harriet called infrequently because she could not stand the company of "his darling wife."[12]

There is no doubt that Mrs. Godwin had her hands full in her new capacity.[13] There were four very young children to begin with, and in 1805 son William was born. In addition, the role of hostess to a steady stream of remarkable visitors --among others Holcroft and Curran and their daughters, the Lambs, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and later Wordsworth--was a strain on her intelligence and humour. She was committed for life to a household in which the finances were always to be in a more or less desperate state.

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[11] Harriet Shelley to Catherine Nugent [1812], in *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (The Julian Edition), edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (London and New York, 1926), IX, 24. Cited hereafter as Julian *Works*.

[12] *Ibid.*, 22 June 1813, IX, 72.

[13] The following account is drawn from the Godwin MSS.

Though the adults' life was hectic, from the children's point of view the days must have been pleasant indeed. There were great family excursions. Sometimes the Godwins trooped, babies and all, out to dinner. A party was organized for the children's benefit to see the illuminations when peace was proclaimed in 1802. Once there was a July jaunt to Greenwich. And there was always the theater. From the age of five, Jane (she was never in her life called Claire by her mother or by Godwin) was included in evening parties to the plays. The scheme of going on the stage which she professed when she was trying to get to know Byron may well have been founded on a real childhood dream.[14]

In 1807 an exciting move was made: the family of seven left the house in Somers Town for an address in the very heart of the city--41 Skinner Street. The move constituted a great improvement as far as Mrs. Godwin was concerned, for she was doing her practical best just then to improve the family's financial status by editing a juvenile library. She worked hard, soliciting manuscripts, endlessly translating, and trying out the finished products on her own willing brood. In the new house the family had living quarters upstairs, and the ground floor, with its counter and its display windows

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[14] Tom Medwin believed that had Claire satisfied her ambition she would have been a real success as an actress.--Thomas Medwin, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, revised edition, edited by H. Buxton Forman (London, 1913), p. 170. Cited hereafter as *Revised Life of Shelley*.

low enough for children to put their noses to the panes and peer in, served as a shop.

The neighborhood was inauspicious, however, and the very house into which they had moved was doomed already to decay. Barely one hundred yards from the door the public executions were celebrated at the Old Bailey, and in the very year that the Godwins moved there the hanging of Haggerty and Halloway for the murder of a lavender merchant drew a crowd in which twenty-eight people were suffocated or trampled to death and sixty injured. It was a street of vacant and burned-out buildings, oil shops, floor-cloth manufacturers, and oyster and orange warehouses--a place to escape from eventually if one could.[15]

But still the interesting visitors came, despite Lamb's statement that Godwin's wife frightened off many of his cronies. At least one of the visitors seems to have come primarily for her company. On 1 December 1808, Aaron Burr recorded in his diary: "A 8 sor. pour rendezvous de Madame G. La vû seule. Un develupment tres franc. Elle a un excellent esprit. Ses projects sur U. S. Promis de don. un rendez. chez moi a mon retour a Weybridge."[16] He met her

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[15] Ford K. Brown, "Notes on 41 Skinner Street," *MLN*, LIV (May, 1939) 326-332. The construction of Holborn Viaduct and the subsequent bombing of that section of the city have very nearly obliterated the streets of the Snow Hill area. Of the buildings, only St. Sepulchre's remains.

[16] Aaron Burr, *The Private Journal of Aaron Burr: Reprinted in full from the Original Manuscript* (Rochester, New York, 1903) I, 2

often, and the children were always glad to see "Gamp."

From 3 August to 13 November in 1808, ten-year-old Jane was at Margate, presumably in boarding school, since none of the family accompanied her farther than Billingsgate; but she returned before Burr arrived and was at home not only throughout his long visit (he stayed until 25 April) but through the following year as well. About once a month Godwin's diary records a party in which she was included: a visit to the theater or to the Pavillion, a dinner party here and there. The Godwins were all often with the Lambs, exchanging meals and sometimes going with Mary Lamb to the theater. Looking back on her childhood in Skinner Street, Jane wrote nostalgically:

> Skinner Street was dull to him [Shelley], but to all others it was a lively and cheerful life that had been led there till he entered it. All the family worked hard, learning and studying: we all took the liveliest interest in the great questions of the day--common topics, gossiping, scandal, found no entrance in our circle for we had been brought up by Mr. Godwin to think it was the greatest misfortune to be fond of the world, or worldly pleasures or of luxury or money; and that there was no greater happiness than to think well of those around us.[17]

The accuracy of this picture is illustrated in Aaron Burr's diary, for by the time he paid a return visit to London in October, 1811, the children were taking an active part in entertaining the guests--singing, dancing, conducting sightseeing tours, and serving tea. Mary was then boarding at Miss

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[17] In an undated note to Trelawny on Shelley's letter of 30 December 1816, quoted in Grylls, op. cit., p. 274.

Petman's at Ramsgate, and almost immediately Charles Clairmont set sail from Miller's Wharf, bound for Edinburgh, where he was to be indentured in the printing office of Constable's. The burden of the entertaining fell upon Jane and Fanny, and even on little William, who was just eight. Burr was seeing a great deal of Amelia Curran that winter, and both were almost daily visitors at the Godwins'. Sometimes they accompanied Godwin, Fanny, and Jane to hear Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, which were given at the London Philosophical Society every Monday and Thursday from 18 November to 27 January.[18] The two little girls attended these lectures religiously, and when Mary returned from Ramsgate in December (looking lovely, but not strong, Burr thought), she joined them regularly. Even eight-year-old Willy went once in a while to hear his Papa's friend preach, and by February he was giving weekly lectures à la Coleridge, reading from the little pulpit specially built for him a lecture written by one of the girls. Burr was much amused at the one he heard on "The Influence of Governments on the Character of the People."[19]

Burr remained the particular friend of the girls, "_les goddesses_," even when he lost sleep after Jane's poisonously

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[18] For the prospectus of this series of lectures, see James Gillman, _The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge_ (London,1838), I, 262.

[19] Burr, _The Private Journal_, II, 326. This subject was to be a favorite of Jane's throughout her life.

strong tea, and he enjoyed walking out with them to such shrines as the bust of Milton at St. Giles in Cripplegate.[20]

Throughout the spring and summer Jane went out a great deal with her mother and Godwin to large teas and dinner parties. Then in the autumn she left London and its gay life for a boarding school kept by a French woman at Walham Green, where she was to stay off and on for about two years, to continue the excellent education which Godwin had provided in his home.

ii

One Saturday night in October, 1812, Jane came home from Walham Green for a weekend in London.[1] On Monday, before she went back, Godwin took her and Fanny with him to dine with his delightful new friends, the Shelleys. The dinner party was a great success and was repeated on the occasion of her next visit home, 7 November. Again as soon as the party was over she had to go back to school, this time just as Mary was coming down from Scotland, bringing along her friend Christie Baxter,

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[20] *Ibid.*, II, 348, 376.

[1] The following account is based on the Godwin MSS. I have intentionally avoided using Mrs. Godwin's biased and inaccurate accounts, with Claire's equally misleading emendations, which are partially printed in Edward Dowden, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London, 1886), II, Appendix B, and in Grylls, op. cit., Appendix D.

who was to stay with the Godwins until the middle of the next summer. Jane must have regretted missing the teas and dinner parties and trips to the theater, but since she was vivacious and more than usually proficient at music and languages, boarding school was probably not an ordeal for her.

At the end of May, Jane came home for the summer and had two whole holiday months with Mary and Christie. Shelley and Harriet had been in town since the first week in April, and early in the summer the Godwins had Queen Mab fresh from the printers, with its glowing dedication to his wife at one end and his daringly radical notes at the other. They probably saw little of Harriet, for her baby Ianthe was born at the end of June, but Shelley himself was often at the shop in Skinner Street, and all the girls had their first real opportunity to get to know him.

The youngsters of the Godwin household apparently took turns with their away-from-home schooling, for at Christmas time in 1813 Jane left Walham Green for good, with her schoolgirl French in fair condition, and William, now ten, went away for the spring term. Then on 23 May Fanny went off for a visit to Pentredevy in Wales; so again for the summer months Mary and Jane were in London and seeing a great deal of Shelley. His wife was in Bath, and from 18 June to 7 July he took most of his meals in Skinner Street and walked out, sometimes with Godwin, sometimes with Marshall, to make arrangements with the moneylenders Nash and Ballachey for a loan to Godwin. But sometimes Shelley walked to Mary's retreat, by

her mother's grave in the churchyard of St. Pancras, where she escaped for a little while from the squalid neighborhood of Holborn and the demands of her over-worked and unsympathetic step-mother.

By 8 July Godwin had become seriously disturbed at the intimacy which had grown between Mary and Shelley, and he had a long talk with his daughter. On 22 July he felt the need of a serious talk with Jane; but all the discussion was to no avail, for at five in the morning of 28 July he discovered that both girls had fled with Shelley.

The elopement was a terrible blow to Mrs. Godwin. Nothing that Mary did could have surprised her, but she had expected more rational behavior from her own daughter. She followed the trio as far as Calais and begged Jane to return, but if Jane had been as miserable and neglected on the voyage as she later said she had been, she must have recovered her high spirits very promptly, for after some deliberation and a counsel with Shelley she forsook her mother and went off to Paris with him and Mary.[2]

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[2] Mrs. Godwin never admitted to Lady Mountcashell, to whom she had written detailed accounts of Mary's perversity and Jane's good character, that her daughter had undertaken such rash action of her own free will. She described Jane as almost literally kidnapped by Shelley and said that on the trip: "Neither of them spoke a word to her . . . Claire looked out of the window, and sometimes shed a tear or two, and said she felt as if the end of the world were come." Rather than admit that Jane had personally flaunted her orders, Mrs. Godwin wrote that Marshall, not she herself, had pursued the party to France and that he had not been able to overtake them.--Dowden, *op. cit.*, II, 545-547.

The world that opened for Jane on that trip was the world of romance come alive. Her adventures had heretofore been all in her reading, and now the truth and beauty of the book world seemed everywhere to be confirmed or surpassed. Mary's account, written twelve years later, recaptures exactly the tone of the journals which she and Shelley and Jane began to keep on that first wonderful trip:

> . . . in the summer of 1814, every inconvenience was hailed as a new chapter in the romance of our travels; the worst annoyance of all, the Custom-house, was amusing as a novelty; we saw with extasy the strange costume of the French women, read with delight our own descriptions in the passport, looked with curiosity on every _plat_, fancying that the fried leaves of artichokes were frogs; we saw shepherds in opera-hats, and post-boys in jack-boots; and (_pour comble de merveille_) heard little boys and girls talk French: it was acting a novel, being an incarnate romance.[3]

When Jane Clairmont left England in 1814, she had not the slightest idea of returning. Her farewell to her mother in Calais was apparently to be considered final. "As we left Dover & England's white cliffs were retiring I said to myself I shall never see these more," she wrote in her new journal.[4] The crossing of France in the wake of the Allied armies confirmed what she had read, that "God made the country and man

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[3] "The English in Italy," _The Westminster Review_, VI (October, 1826), 326. This delightfully written review by Mary Shelley has not, to my knowledge, been reprinted in full.

[4] Ashley MSS., 27 August 1814. The following account of the six weeks' tour is drawn from this source, except as otherwise noted.

made the town," for the _paysage_ was exciting and romantic, whereas the towns were filthy and inhospitable. To the reader of Gothic romance, the ruins which dotted the countryside, even if sometimes of recent vintage, the result of the marauding armies, were "romantic." Shelley's journal is full of horror at the devastation of war, but Jane's is uniformly enthusiastic. The village of Langres she would gladly have pulled down and destroyed, she said, were it not for the "grand ruins" at its entrance,[5] and later while travelling down the Rhine she observed, "Ruins have a fine effect & henceforth I shall hardly think any scene complete without them."[6]

Throughout the trip books and nature were run together in her mind. Shelley often read aloud, and the three travellers had a considerable library stowed away in their pockets and scanty luggage.[7] Jane wrote, for example:

> I read _As You like it_, which Shelley lent me, for though he forgot to bring his watch, he put in his pocket three small volumes of Shakespeare, and carries them about every where with him. The wild scene in which this romantic drama is laid, accorded wonderfully with the scene before us--Shelley

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[5] _Ibid_., 15 August 1814.

[6] _Ibid_., 4 September 1814.

[7] The two journals mention reading in Byron, Godwin, Abbe Barruel, Tacitus, Shakespeare, and several books each by Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft.

> said poetry read in a room never came so near the soul as if read in a beautiful spot, in the wide open air and under the wide open Heaven.[8]

At Lucerne she had an attack of horrors at an over-sensitive reading of *Richard III* and *King Lear*, serious enough to delay the trip momentarily,[9] and two days later, after a splendid sunset on the Rhine, she recorded in her journal:

> The undulating motion of the waves rolling ever one over the other produced the same effect as if snakes were creeping perpetually onwards--I now thought of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner--"Beyond the shadow of the ship I watched the water snakes"--I am convinced that the descriptions contained in that Poem are more copied from Nature than one is at first aware of.[10]

The intellectual activity on the tour was not limited to reading and discussion. On 10 August Mary pleased Shelley by beginning to write her story *Hate*, and Jane immediately set to work on her tale *The Ideot*. Such apparently mimetic behavior raises a question that must be faced throughout the life-long relationships of these people: just how well did they get along together?

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[8] From an expanded copy of Claire's journal in the possession of Mr. Carl Pforzheimer, cited hereafter as the Pforzheimer Variant. Claire apparently went back over her journal, filling in details as Mary did in preparing her *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* for publication.

[9] Ashley MSS., 27 August 1814, and *Mary Shelley's Journal*, edited by Frederick L. Jones (Norman, Oklahoma, 1947), p. 12.

[10] Ashley MSS., 29 August 1814.

It was to be expected that Jane might at times be in the way on a honeymoon trip. Only a few signs that this was true can be discovered, but as portents they have some significance. They were always thrown too close together for much privacy. When Jane could not sleep at Trois Maisons because of the cold paws of rats on her face, she was forced to retreat from her "four-footed enemies" to the bed that Mary and Shelley shared.[11] At Neufchatel, to allow himself a little time alone with Mary, Shelley set a task of Rousseau translation for Jane and left her alone to do it while they went off to explore.[12] It is impossible to tell whether Jane's childish irritation at being left out was evident at the time, or whether she remembered having been vexed when she came to revise her journal at a later date, but on the next day, 21 August, Shelley had to have a talk with her, "concerning Jane's character," and when they arrived at Soleure, Shelley and Mary went off without her to visit the cathedral.[13]

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[11] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 7.

[12] Pforzheimer Variant, 20 August 1814.

[13] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 11. Three crossed-out words, the first just legible as "Shelley," stand as a monument to this rebuke on the pages of Jane's journal for that day. It is impossible to determine the date at which Claire censored her own journals.

Jane was only eight months younger than Mary, but when one is sixteen, eight months are important; as a result Jane was consistently treated as "little sister." The tour was to be educational, and like any schoolgirl she did exercises which were set for her. Mary and Shelley did not take her completely into their confidence on affairs of money,[14] and they were tolerantly amused at her wild enthusiasm for each new scene and her desire to settle down forever in every attractive town they passed.[15] The charming Swiss gentleman who assisted them in their departure for Neufchatel had spotted Mary and Shelley as eloping lovers and asked--

> . . . if indeed they had escaped from England, on account of love, and they said "Yes" --He then begged them to return to England, rather than proceed further--but they refused. Next he asked if I had also run away for the sake of love and I answered "Oh! dear Nô!--I came to speak French." He seemed puzzled and yet amused by our truth and simplicity.[16]

Altogether, the puzzling and amusing arrangement appears to have worked out remarkably well. Shelley and Mary could imagine being more comfortable, but not more happy. Indeed, there were probably few happier days ahead of them. The

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[14] The watch and chain that Shelley "forgot to bring" (see above) had been sold in Paris, without Claire's knowledge, for eight napoleons and five francs, which allowed them to continue with their trip. --Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 5. Also, Jane really believed that at the end of their trip they went back to England simply "because the stove don't suit." --Ashley MSS., 26 August 1814.

[15] "History of a Six Weeks' Tour," Julian Works, VI, 94.

[16] Pforzheimer Variant, 21 August 1814.

cloud, as yet disregarded or unseen, was already on the horizon.

On the trip back to England Jane enjoyed her usual immunity to seasickness, and by her own account was nearly washed overboard laughing at one of her fellow-passengers in his misery. She arrived back in London in boisterous high spirits, seemingly unaware of the proportions of the problems which loomed before Shelley and Mary. Indeed, her sense of proportion was often more than a little faulty.

On her return she had a choice: she could give up her friends and return to Skinner Street to stay,[17] or she could remain with Shelley and Mary to share their precarious life of dodging bailiffs and chasing moneylenders and lawyers. The choice was an easy one for her, and as a matter of fact she had it both ways, since she enjoyed not only her freedom from the domestic tyranny of the Godwins but also her occasional visits to Skinner Street. Like her brother Charles, she enjoyed having a foot in each camp and playing the somewhat ambiguous role of intermediary.

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[17] Godwin wrote on 8 November to his friend Taylor of Norwich that they proposed first that Jane go as a governess; when she declined, they suggested that she go as a visitor in some family. She offered to comply on two conditions: "that she should in all situations openly proclaim and earnestly support, a total contempt for the laws and institutions of society, and that no restraint should be imposed upon her correspondence and intercourse with those from whom she was separated." The Godwins, needless to say, refused. --Roger Ingpen, *Shelley in England* (London, 1917), pp. 641-642.

What was abject misery for Shelley and Mary in the months that followed--the secret meetings, the painful separations, the sudden shifts of lodging, the stealthy notes, and the clandestine conferences in coffeehouses and churchyards--represented high adventure and intrigue for Jane.[18] She entered with wild enthusiasm into any scheme, however fantastic, such as the plot to steal away to Ireland with Eliza and Hellen Shelley, and Peacock and his sweetheart, Marianne de St. Croix.[19] Shelley enjoyed her naive and excitable temperament. Her vivacity made her the perfect companion for sailing fire-boats and concocting projects.

Her horrors in Switzerland over King Lear ought to have warned him about her volatility, but it was not until the night of 7 October that Shelley realized the consequences of over-encouraging this bookishly romantic and essentially juvenile frame of mind. Both Shelley and Jane have left

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[18] See Shelley's lines in "Peter Bell the Third":

> Hell is a city much like London--
>   A populous and smoky city;
> There are all sorts of people undone,
> And there is little or no fun done;
>   Small justice shown and still less pity.
>
> --Julian Works, III,266.

[19] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 17, and Ashley MSS., 30 September to 2 October 1814.

elaborate accounts of that long and exhausting night.[20] Only two nights before, Jane had been sitting up over the fire until one, talking to Shelley, long after Mary had gone to bed. Shelley needed much less sleep than Mary and sometimes read for most of the night; he was probably not sorry for Jane's company, always available when Mary was indisposed. On the night of the seventh, their talk of atrocities and Gothic horrors resulted in a hallucination so juvenile that it might now be matched by the experiences of hundreds of teen-aged girls in their boarding schools and sororities and around the fires of innumerable summer camps. But Shelley took her terrified frenzy at the levitation of a bed pillow seriously, and they spent the night in fitful conversation. No wonder that her nervous state, aggravated by a sleepless night, produced a second fit just before dawn, brought on, she said, by an expression in Shelley's face of "deep sadness and conscious power over her." He covered his face, but to no avail. In a moment she was writhing and shrieking on the floor in a very genuine convulsion, and only Mary's arrival and the communication of the news that she and Shelley were expecting a baby succeeded in bringing her out of it.

For a while Jane was melancholy and subdued, but certainly not cured. Her hallucination had been very real to her, and

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[20] Mary Shelley's Journal, pp. 18-19, and Ashley MSS., 7 October 1814. Claire's account has been published in Dowden, op. cit., I, 480-482.

two days later she nearly repeated the whole scene. She wrote in her journal: "Mary goes to bed at eight---sit up with Shelley over the fire--get rather in a horrid mood--go to bed at eleven cannot sleep all night." In later years she altered this to read, "we goes [*sic*] to bed at eight--get rather in a horrid mood--thinking of ghosts cannot sleep all night."

On 14 October Shelley was really disturbed. Jane had walked in her sleep and groaned so horribly that after two hours he gave up and brought her to Mary. The next morning she apparently made another bid for attention, probably unconsciously, and got from Shelley exactly the opposite reaction from that which she had expected. First he ridiculed her[21] (as Peacock had done after her first attack of horrors), and then a quarrel ensued in which he seems to have informed her bluntly that she was behaving like a child and a fool. Then, realizing that he was to a certain extent responsible for her behavior and in a much broader sense responsible for her education, he told himself that a true philosopher must not be discouraged, that even the most immature minds may change, and that his display of anger was unwise. After all, he had observed some softness and feeling in her, and her unsettled

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[21] "The next morning the chimney-board in Jane's room is found to have walked leisurely into the middle of the room, accompanied by the pillow, who, being very sleepy, tried to get back into bed again, but fell down on his back." --(Shelley's note)--*Mary Shelley's Journal*, pp. 20-21.

mind and unformed character might yet be moulded to the calm and dignity which Mary seemed already to have achieved.[22]

Jane, after this firm rebuke, tried to deserve Shelley's forbearance and patience. There were no more horrors. Her journal witnessed a fresh resolve: "But to know one's faults is to mend them--perhaps this morning though productive of very painful feelings has in reality been of more essential benefit to me than any I ever yet passed." She regretted the things she had unmeaningly said, "things produced by the bitterness of disappointment," and she added a phrase which would have merited no more than passing attention had she not been at such pains at a later date to cross it out: "I hate these feelings."[23]

That Shelley was completely bound up in Mary, now several months pregnant, and that Jane, without the inner resources that sustained her friends, craved more attention than was her due is easily understandable. She was, like Mary, sexually mature, but she seemed at this stage not to have had the intellectual maturity or the power of self-understanding to realize why she was behaving like a spoiled brat. That night again she groaned so that she had to sleep with Mary, and she recorded and then later blotted in her journal, "can't think

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ashley MSS., 14 October 1814.

what the deuce is the matter with me--'I weep yet never know why--I sigh yet feel no pain.'" In later years she seems to have understood the nameless and objectless longing of her youth well enough to want to remove the traces of it from her journal.[24]

Denied the emotional outlet of her midnight hysterics, she grasped at the obvious substitute. She honestly wanted to grow up, to become a steady and well-balanced woman. And patient Shelley was eager to justify his philosophical educational theories by helping her. "Shelley comes into my room & thinks he was to blame--but I don't--how I like good kind explaining people."

They entered on a period of prolonged explanations. On 16 October Jane wrote, and later crossed out: "Mary goes to bed. Shelley explains he thought I despised him. We talk to near one." Two nights later the conversation was repeated; they talked over the idea of friendship, and for the first time Mary showed signs of irritation. All she wrote in her diary was "I go to bed soon, but Shelley and Jane sit up, and for a wonder, do not frighten themselves."[25] But Jane was offended by whatever was said to her the next day, and Mary had to take over the task of explaining--explaining that she had meant no unkindness.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 21.

Up to this point it had been Shelley who had been most bothered by Jane's erratic behavior. Now it was Mary who was disturbed, and Shelley had to console and reassure her. "Give my love to Jane," he wrote on 24 October. "I think that she has a sincere affection for you."[26]

On 25 October Jane spent an afternoon with Fanny and gleaned a great deal of Skinner Street news, among which was the information that the Godwins wanted her to go into a family.[27] This news so depressed her that for three days she was idle and listless. Then a fit of enthusiasm came upon her, and she set to work with renewed vows and increased vigor, in the hope of proving Shelley wrong--"what a divine Pleasure"--in his gloomy prognosis of her character. Her journal began to include reading notes. But there was still obviously much to be desired. In undertaking to form her character, Shelley had shouldered a formidable task. She was not capable of realizing how miserable Shelley was made by his hide-and-seek game with the creditors. When he wrote to her that he was unhappy, she noted in her journal, "God in Heaven what has he to be unhappy about!"[28] The next day he must have had to

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[26] Julian Works, IX, 99. N.B. This would hardly constitute a consolation if Mary's disturbance had anything of jealousy in it. The problem was obviously a direct irritation and misunderstanding between Mary and her step-sister.

[27] See above, p. 21, n. 17.

[28] Ashley MSS., 3 November 1814. First three words heavily crossed out but still legible.

speak sharply to her again, for she went on record as being much disappointed in him, one she had previously thought uniformly kind and considerate.[29]

More serious still, Jane had no way of understanding how much Mary and Shelley enjoyed simply being together and quietly talking, reading, and writing. On Sunday, 6 November, when Shelley was free from the snooping bailiffs, he spent a quiet day with Mary and Jane, writing a great heap of letters, reading a little, and talking: "this is a day devoted to Love in idleness," wrote Mary contentedly. But to Jane (or Clara, as she now began to call herself) the day was a bore. "Very philosophical way of spending the day--to sleep & talk--why this is merely vegetating." This characteristic passage provides a key for understanding much of Claire's life. The combination of vivacious energy with a lack of any really creative ability produced the condition which was for many years to be Claire's enemy--ennui. It kept her from ever genuinely getting along with Mary, and it resulted in the long succession of scenes and tantrums that rocked her life. She needed the stimulus of something going on--something in which she had an important role--and when no such situation existed, she could be counted on to imagine or produce one.

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[29] The following day Shelley held her completely to blame for the falling-out. Ingpen suggests that Jane had been in the way at Shelley's meeting with Mary in Gray's Inn Gardens. --Julian Works, IX, 108n.

Throughout the rest of 1814 there were no further volcanic eruptions in the *ménage à trois*, but the rumble of discontent, usually centering on Claire, is heard through Mary's journal. One week in November produced the following entries:

> Nov. 9.---Jane gloomy; she is very sullen with Shelley. Well, never mind, my love--we are happy.
> Nov. 10.---Jane is not well, and does not speak the whole day. . . . Shelley talks her into a good humour.
> Nov. 13.---She [Fanny] returns; Jane goes with her [to Skinner Street]. Shelley returns (he had been to Hookham's); he disapproves.
> Nov. 14.---[Shelley] I wish this girl had a resolute mind. Without firmness, understanding is impotent, and the truest principles unintelligible.[30]

Sometimes it was Mary who explained matters to Claire, sometimes Shelley, but throughout this period it is clear from their journal that they treated her with conscientious patience as they would a wayward child.[31]

By the end of 1814 Claire had firmly established for herself, despite her waywardness, a position which she was to maintain to the end of Shelley's life. Always a disturbing force in the household because of the essential difference in her temperament from that of either Shelley or Mary, she nevertheless served a useful purpose: when Mary was indisposed,

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[30] *Mary Shelley's Journal*, p. 25.

[31] Further evidence of this superior attitude: "Clara's whim."--*Ibid.*, p. 29; "Interesting conversation interrupted by Clara's childish superstition." (Shelley's note)--*Ibid.*,p.31.

as she was while she was awaiting her child, Claire was ready to walk out with Shelley, to talk to him, to entertain him, and to play her role of the promising and responsive pupil.

Claire always took a serious interest in Shelley's health; the whole corpus of his letters to her reflects this mutual concern. They commiserated and advised and related symptoms and treatments--a habit which became permanent in Claire and in her later life intensified her old-maidishness.

But her most important value to Shelley was on a much higher level. It is perhaps best explained by one of Shelley's fragmentary discussions of beauty:

> It is sweet to feel the beauties of nature in every pulsation, in every nerve--but it is far sweeter to be able to express this feeling to one who loves you. To feel all that is divine in the green-robed earth and the starry sky is a penetrating yet vivid pleasure which, when it is over, presses like the memory of misfortune; but if you can express those feelings --if, secure of sympathy (for without sympathy it is worse than the taste of those apples whose core is bitter ashes), if thus secure you can pour forth into another's most attentive ear the feelings by which you are entranced, there is an exultation of the spirit in the utterance--a glory of happiness which far transcends all human transports, and seems to invest the soul as the saints are with light, with a halo untainted, holy, and undying.[32]

It is necessary to understand this compelling need for expression, this craving for an audience--and a sympathetic audience--which was one of the powerful forces in Shelley's life. This audience did not need to be an active intelligence.

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[32] Julian Works, VII, 154. "Social enjoyment, in some form or other, is the alpha and the omega of existence." --Ibid., I, 73.

It was not a debate or a competition that Shelley craved, nor yet an equal perception of beauty, though he could deeply appreciate these qualities in their place. No, the only requirement was a passively sympathetic and loving companionship, a sensitive instrument keyed to his touch, upon which he could play the harmonies which he drew from nature. And for this role Claire was undeniably well suited.

When she was with the Shelleys Claire displayed no marked originality. She was strongly impressionable, and her journals reflect the taste and the activities of those around her, particularly of Shelley. Their long walks, which Mary, confined as she was by a series of pregnancies, could not always share, were undoubtedly productive, at least from time to time, of this exultation of spirit which Shelley described. From this relationship both Claire and Shelley drew intense pleasure, and Shelley was delighted and grateful.

But Mary, while not openly resentful, could not help being wistful: "Very unwell. Shelley and Clara walk out, as usual, to heaps of places."[33] Not a particularly significant entry, it is true, but the little phrase "as usual" rings like a small bell, echoing plaintively through the pages of the journal thereafter. She was distinctly envious, but not jealous, as Shelley's walks with Claire became a daily occurrence.

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[33] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 24.

The first sign of real irritation on Mary's part was on 12 March 1815, just after her baby had died: "Very quiet all the morning, and happy, for Clara does not get up till 4."[34] Clearly it was Claire's very presence that was irritating Mary in her weakened condition. She simply didn't want to have to see her day in and day out. She and Shelley agreed that Claire must go, and they had apparently talked of it for some time before the subject appeared in the journal on 14 March 1815.

By that time Claire had been brought to see that she ought to leave, and she advertized under the initials "A. Z." for a position as a companion.[35] But no suitable position was immediately open; the spring lingered on, with many a walk and Italian lesson and game of chess with Shelley, and still she did not go. Mary was patient. Her journals show no particular resentment; it was enough that it had been settled that Claire was to leave. Godwin spoke to Mrs. Leonora Knapp, the owner of his former house in Somers Town and a good friend of the family, but after a long delay she decided that she would not be able to help.

At long last Lynmouth was settled upon as Claire's destination, and only on the day before she was to leave did Mary let loose in her journal some of her pent-up feeling: "Shelley and the lady walk out. After tea, talk; write Greek characters.

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[34] Ibid., p. 40.

[35] Ibid., p. 41. See also Newman Ivey White, Shelley (New York), 1940, I, 694.

Shelley and his friend have a last conversation."[35] On 13 May she was gone, and Mary inscribed firmly: "I begin a new Journal with our regeneration."[36]

It was in a sense a period of regeneration for Claire too. She left with Shelley's wise counsel uppermost in her mind, and in her letter to Fanny from Lynmouth she sounded nearly as sententiously uplifting as Jane Austen's Mary Bennet:

> You may learn wisdom & Fortitude in adversity & in Prosperity you may relieve & soothe--I feel anxious to be wise--to be capable of knowing the best--of following resolutely--however painful what Nature & serious thought may prescribe & of acquiring a prompt & vigorous Judgement & powers capable of Execution. What are you reading?[37]

Claire herself was still immersed in her reading. She saw her rural retreat through the rose-tinted glasses of Rousseau and Wordsworth and Coleridge and Gray. It appears that here, as in every instance when her experience could be made to tally with her preconceived notion, she was happy. Whether she went to Lynmouth as a companion to her mother's friend Mrs. Bicknell

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[35] *Mary Shelley's Journals*, p. 46.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 47. White makes it clear that there were other and more important reasons for this declaration than just Claire's departure. Nevertheless, her leaving undoubtedly contributed to the relief expressed by Mary.--*op. cit*., I, 404.

[37] Abinger MSS., 28 May 1815. Published in Mrs. Julian Marshall *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (London, 1889), I, 117-119. Cf. Shelley's dedication to Mary in "Laon and Cythna":

I will be wise
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power.

--Julian *Works*, II, 252.

or whether, as is more probable, she was boarded in the country at Shelley's expense, it appears from the whole tone and content of her letter to Fanny that she was genuinely contented in proving to herself, as well as to her family and friends, that she could be happy when alone.[38]

One of the embarrassing conditions that a student of Claire Clairmont's life has to face is the frequent conspicuous difference between Claire's reaction to a situation at the time it occurs and her statement at a later date of what happened as she remembered it. The visit to Lynmouth provides an example of this change of opinion. It is difficult to believe that the whole contented letter to Fanny is a trumped-up affair, yet twenty years later, looking back on her isolation from her friends and not having her letter to Fanny to help refresh her memory, Claire found it impossible to believe that she had been anything but miserable:

> Hatred and persecution let loose their destroying hounds upon me in the very dawn of life; but a mere child I was driven from all I loved into a solitary spot, without a friend to

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[38] Mrs. Godwin is responsible for the story about Mrs. Bicknell. There is no supporting evidence. On the other hand, the discontent evident in Mary's journal is sufficient to explain Shelley's willingness to pay the bill in order to assure to Mary and himself the much-needed privacy and peace. Claire's own complaint to Mary of her companionless state assumes Mary's awareness that she was alone at Lynmouth; and as White points out (*op. cit.*, I, 695) had Claire's choice been influenced by Mrs. Godwin, Fanny would certainly have known of it, as she obviously did not. So much for Mrs. Godwin's story.

soothe my affliction, without even an acquaintance to exchange a word, day after day I sat companionless upon that deserted sea-shore, mentally exclaiming, a life of sixteen years is already too much for me to bear.[39]

This letter, written to Mary from an abyss of melancholy at the death of Lady Mountcashell, can hardly be considered a balanced recollection, but there is little question that among the delights of the Lynmouth retreat the chilly idea must have haunted her that she had been sent away against her own desire, even if with her consent.

While away from the Shelleys Claire was an erratic letter-writer. In July, Mary, having received no word from her for some time, suspected that she might have heard that Shelley was in London and run up to see him.[40] In October Claire was in Ireland, where her brother Charles was investigating the distillery business.[41] And on 5 January she was back in London, visiting three nights at a time in Skinner street, and ready for a new adventure.[42]

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[39] Abinger MSS., 2 June 1835.

[40] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, edited by Frederick L. Jones (Norman, Oklahoma, 1944), I, 8. There is no evidence that she saw either Shelley or Mary that summer, but it is reasonable to assume that while they were travelling on the Devon coast they stopped to visit her.

[41] Julian Works, IX, 120. Shelley sent ten pounds to her there.

[42] Godwin MSS.

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The year 1816 presented Claire with another decision to make. Shelley was providing the money for her to live in London, but he could not be asked to do so indefinitely.[1] She wanted to avoid the drudgery and the sacrifice of freedom involved in the life of a governess or a companion. The country life, rusticans sed non rusticus, was bound to become the "merely vegetating" which she was eager to avoid. Indeed, the opportunities for a well-educated but impecunious young lady were somewhat limited at that time. Mary was the only person she knew who had found a way of life exactly to her liking: Claire's entire social and intellectual training seemed to have suited her for one position--companion to a poet.

It must have appeared to Claire that fate had set the stage for her entrance in January of 1816. England's most glamorous poet, whose work had the sanction of vigorous praise from Shelley, was separated from his wife in the middle of that month. It must have looked to Claire like the story of Shelley and Harriet all over again, except that for Byron

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[1] For Shelley's checks to Claire in March of 1816 see Walter Edwin Peck, Shelley: His Life and Work (Boston and New York, 1927), II, 436-439. As far back as January of 1814 Francis Place had been of the opinion that Godwin ought to make his grown-up girls maintain themselves.--White, op. cit., I, 706.

there was nobody to console him and inspire him and, in short, play Mary Shelley to him. Claire was ready to step into the role: she had understudied it for two years.

Her very first letter to Byron revealed her old weakness, but never before had it left her so vulnerable: she was still attempting to transfer her book-experience literally into the world of her everyday living. As yet she had not been seriously disillusioned. Her acquaintance with Shelley had gone a long way to convince her that to love the man and his poems was the same thing. She wrote to Byron to confess the love she had borne him many years.[2] Her expectation of his "unbounded devotion" in return betrays the naivete of the girl still not eighteen,at the same time that it pays an indirect compliment to the love which Mary had received from Shelley. Its pathetic high hopes and perishable illusion are about balanced by its boldness and effrontery.

Undoubtedly it was the latter which were most conspicuous to Byron. Claire's letter was very like the one he had received from the notorious courtesan Harriette Wilson two years before--the same apology for intrusion, the same insistence that no harm will be done and some good may come of a

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[2] Murray MSS. Excerpts from these letters and occasionally entire letters have been published in Grylls, *op. cit.*; in *The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals*, edited by Rowland E. Prothero (London and New York, 1899), III, 429-437, cited hereafter as Prothero; and in George Paston and Peter Quennell, "*To Lord Byron*": *Feminine Profiles based upon unpublished letters*, 1807-1824 (New York, 1939), pp. 202-259.

meeting, the same flaunting of convention in the same breath with a plea for secrecy. Harriette Wilson had for the time being been snubbed, and in her memoirs ten years later she quoted Byron as having told her, "I think you must be aware that a writer is in general very different from his productions, and always disappoints those who expect to find in him qualities more agreeable than those of others."[3] This was the very advice Claire needed, but there can be no doubt that had she received it she would have disregarded it as contrary to her experience.

The story of Claire Clairmont's pursuit and brief capture of her poet is too familiar to need a detailed repetition here; it is common knowledge that she attracted his attention first with her theatrical and then with her literary projects, and finally with the story of her life (which Byron was inclined not to believe until she produced as evidence some letters and then Mary Shelley herself). She saw almost at once that he did not care for her, and she soon came to anticipate the Byronic sneer.[4] But she had great faith in the

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[3] The Memoirs of Hariette Wilson, Written by Herself (London, privately printed, 1924), I, 260.

[4] In her first letter to Byron in Switzerland she said, "were I to float by your window drowned all you would say would be 'Ah, voilà.'" --Murray MSS., printed in Paston and Quennell, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

power of patient and faithful devotion. It is clear that she had in mind that same concept of ideal unselfish love which in the year before had caused Mary to try her best to please Hogg so that they might set a physical intimacy as the final seal upon the intellectual intimacy of the community of philosophical spirits.[5] Claire denied to Byron that she was drawn to him by physical passion, and she expressed the hope and expectation that Byron would fall in love with Mary (indeed they hit it off very well). The evidence of Claire's later life appears as witness to the sincerity of her statement to him in 1816: "I have no passion; I had ten times rather be your male companion than your mistress."[6]

The Shelleys left England for Switzerland on 3 May 1816, with Claire and their baby William, and planned at the time

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[5] On 1 January 1815 Mary wrote to Hogg that when she came to love him, "we shall be happier I do think, than the angels who sing for ever & ever, the lovers of Jane's world of perfection." --Harriet and Mary: Being the Relations Between Percy Bysshe Shelley, Harriet Shelley, Mary Shelley, and Thomas Jefferson Hogg, edited by Walter Sidney Scott (London, 1944), p. 46.

[6] Murray MSS., printed in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

to remain in Geneva until autumn.[7] The summer for Claire was a bitter-sweet one; her affection for Byron and her realization that he really cared nothing at all for her deepened simultaneously. She saw only enough of his gentle and unstoical side to confirm the "eternal love" to which she had pledged herself. Her pregnancy, which she recognized while she was in Switzerland, committed her inescapably to that love. Before she left England she had been able to write of the possibility of never seeing Byron again, but the promise of the baby nourished her hope.

Shelley and Mary knew better. They realized that Claire had forced her attention upon Byron, that he had accepted her advances unwillingly, and that as far as he was concerned she was no more than another Harriette Wilson. His own peace of mind prevented him from taking even Shelley's word for it that the girl had really fallen in love.

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[7] Julian *Works*, IX, 163. I have no new evidence as to when Shelley and Mary discovered the nature of Claire's liaison. The fact that they changed their plans at the last minute and left Hogg behind might suggest that Shelley knew before they left, but there are other plausible explanations. The fact that when Claire first arrived at Geneva she made elaborate arrangements to bring Byron to her room without his being discovered by Shelley might imply that she still kept her secret, but this evidence too is inconclusive. At any rate, there was enough to bring them to Geneva without Claire's making the disclosure. In one letter, for example, Claire told Byron that Mary had entreated her in private to obtain his address abroad so that they might renew their acquaintance. --Murray MSS., quoted by Paston and Quennell, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

After her return to England in September Claire continued to write voluminously to Byron.[8] Her letters are remarkably interesting as the productions of a teen-age girl, and one perceives that had she not been so awkwardly on the defensive they might have been gay and charming. They are coy, flirtatious, and self-consciously calculated to please. But it is painfully clear that she had no real notion of the kind of man she was writing to. Her tactlessness makes the reader wince, and the effect on Byron is painful to contemplate. She wrote catty and scornful remarks about the other women in his life and even of his friends Kinnaird and Polidori; she revealed herself as a little reformer by imploring him to avoid excesses in wine; she begged unendingly for letters from him. He read hers and put them away, sometimes crushed as though he had only just resisted the impulse to hurl them into the fire.

On the return to England Shelley found lodgings in Bath so that he and Mary might be near Claire to see her through her childbearing and to avoid the curiosity of the Godwins. Claire took a room apart from the Shelleys and assumed for a

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[8] Murray MSS.

while the title of Mrs. Clairmont.[9] There was no real alternative to this arrangement, but for Mary there was again the old tension of the day in, day out presence of Claire's disturbing influence. Shelley was often away in London, and Mary's letters to him suggest that Claire's company was harder for her to stand when he was away; her much-quoted plea for "*absentia Clariæ*" was made at this time.[10] Mary had good reason to wish her away; there is no doubt that Claire was tactless. Just when Mary was looking forward most longingly to the possible arrival of "darling Ianthe and Charles," Shelley's two children by Harriet, Claire was thoughtlessly planting the seeds of discontent by continually reminding William that he was going to "lose his pre-eminence as eldest and be helped third at table."[11]

The friendly love between Shelley and Claire continued, but even here there was a new tension, since it was Shelley's duty to make clear to the deluded girl the truth that she was loth to face--that she was not to expect letters or visits

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[9] The Shelleys, with little William and the Genevese nurse Elise Romieux, lived at 7 Abbey Church-yard, whereas Claire lived at 12 New Bond Street. For Claire's elaborate joke with Elise about her double identity as both Mrs. Clairmont and her unmarried sister Claire, see *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 34.

[10] *Ibid.*, I, 14.

[11] *Ibid.*, I, 16.

from Byron. Shelley's realistic attitude towards Claire's relation with Byron is clear from his letters. He had suffered himself from her importunate enthusiasms and adolescent effusions, if not in quite the same manner or degree. "Claire is about to enjoin me some messages which are better conceived than expressed," he asserted in a letter to Byron, candidly but not unkindly.[12] There is evidence in a letter from Mary to Shelley that at least a small strain could be perceived in his relations with Claire as a result of her ambiguous situation: "I have not asked Claire but I dare say she would send her love although I dare say she would scold you well if you were here."[13]

The year 1816 brought to the Shelleys much more serious disturbances, however, than these relatively minor domestic difficulties. On 9 October the first disaster struck: Fanny Imlay committed suicide. She was twenty-two years old, four years older than Mary and Claire, and older sister to both of them practically from their birth. In the midst of an excessively long but generally representative letter to Byron Claire took stock retrospectively of her relationship with the girl:

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[12] Julian Works, IX, 196

[13] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 15.

> Are you angry with me now dearest that I have told you all the news I can to please you. If you are forget all the complaining in the first sheet perhaps it is my health that makes me so melancholy and peevish I suffer from Rheumatism. Then I live in such an extreme solitude that I do nothing but think on my disquietudes till perhaps I get cross. And to this the unhappy death of that poor girl. I passed the first fourteen years of my life with her & though I cannot say I had so great an affection for her as might be expected yet she is the first person of my acquaintance who has died & her death so horrible too. Now if I tell you all my thoughts dearest you mustn't bring them against me to make me look foolish as you did that hateful novel thing I wrote.[14] Do you know, dearest, I do not like to be the object of pity & nothing makes me so angry as when M[ary] & S[helley] tell me not to expect to hear from you.[15]

It is hardly strange that Claire and Fanny were not close friends. In any given situation Claire would play the rebel, whereas Fanny would behave, in Mary's word, "slavishly." When Mary came back from the six weeks' tour in 1814, Godwin threatened never to speak to Fanny again if she saw Mary, and Mrs. Godwin, a month later, refused to let twenty-year-old Fanny come down to dinner because she had received a lock of Mary's hair.[16] Claire considered her step-sister excessively

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[14] In one of her early letters to Byron Claire had asked him to read the rough draft of a novel she had started and to advise her as to her fitness for a literary career. The outline of the novel is incorporated in that letter.--Prothero, *op. cit.*, III, 434-435.

[15] Murray MSS. The passage here quoted is unpublished. Two sentences of it are in *Shelley and Mary* (privately printed, 1882), I, 150-151. I have used Dowden's copy, now in the British Museum, of this four-volume collection of Shelley family papers.

[16] *Mary Shelley's Journal*, pp. 25,30.

sentimental and thought Henry MacKenzie's Man of Feeling would make her a perfect husband.[17]

Mrs. Godwin did little to promote a happy relationship between the girls, and with her notorious tactlessness, some of which was inherited by her daughter, she played them against each other. "I understand from Mamma that I am your laughing-stock & the constant beacon of your satire," wrote Fanny unhappily to Mary on 29 May 1816; and exactly two months later she was so terribly upset by the depression in England, the widespread unemployment, and her own lack of independence, particularly financial, that she wrote to Mary, "I am not well--my mind always keeps my body in a fever." In just these two scraps from Fanny's pen it is possible to see the motivation for her overdose of laudanum, without looking any farther afield for the source of her despair. One of her last thoughts had been for Claire's happiness, for only a little more than a week before her death she had written Mary, saying, "I am very glad you have got Jane a pianoforte; if anything can do her good and restore her to industry, it is music. I think I gave her all the music here; however, I will look again for what I can find."[18]

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[17] Ashley MSS., 8 November 1814.

[18] Fanny Imlay's letters are among the Abinger MSS. One excerpt only has been printed, in Shelley and Mary, I, 140.

Harriet's suicide--her body was found two months to the day after Fanny's death--was the second severe blow to the Shelleys. It ushered in the prolonged and dismal struggle for the custody of the children, a struggle desperate and doomed, which caused Shelley to be away from Mary (and from Claire, who also protested) for extended periods of time. On 30 December the marriage of Mary and Shelley took place, with the immediate result of dissolving the Godwin's persistent animosity. But the "respectability" achieved by the marriage was insufficient to bring about the restoration of Charles and Ianthe.

At last 1817 arrived, and on 12 January Claire's baby was born. There was no longer any need to remain in Bath, and on 18 February Claire left her little girl, temporarily called by the pagan name of Alba, with Elise and came down to London with William Shelley. The Godwins never suspected anything of her story, and, indeed, were still having trouble believing it more than three years later.[19]

On 18 March Mary and Shelley moved into Albion House in Marlow, and Claire and her little girl stayed for a while with

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[19] Maria Gisborne's journal, 28 August 1820, in *Maria Gisborne and Edward E. Williams: Shelley's Friends*, edited by Frederick L. Jones (Norman, Oklahoma, 1951), p. 48. I cannot agree with the editor of this journal that because Godwin was still incredulous that Byron was the father he must therefore have considered Shelley as the only other candidate for the honor.

Leigh and Marianne Hunt in Hampstead while the Shelleys enjoyed the quiet of their new house. As soon as Claire was away Mary could genuinely sympathize with her: "poor girl she *must* be lonely," she wrote to the Hunts.[20] At the end of March Claire rejoined the Shelleys and was with them when Godwin came for one of his several visits to Marlow, from 2 to 6 April.[21] The Hunts and Godwin's friend Pilcher visited for a while at Marlow, and then in May the Hunt children--John, Mary, and Swynburne--came down for a long visit, accompanied by Marianne Hunt's talented sister, Bessie Kent.[22] For part of the time that they were her guests, Mary was in London and Claire took over the role of hostess.

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[20] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 23. But no sooner were they together again than Mary had to make a conscious effort to get on with her. She then wrote to Shelley, "Clare is forever wearying with her idle & childish complaints." --*Ibid*., I, 45.

[21] Godwin MSS.

[22] Elizabeth Kent was the author of *Flora Domestica, or The Portable Flower Garden; with Directions for the Treatment of Plants in Pots; and Illustrations from the Works of the Poets* (London, 1823). After a long preface devoted to a discussion of great men who have enjoyed flowers, including the sketches of Shelley and Mavrocordato with which she had been helped by her brother-in-law, she listed each plant that could be reared in a pot or tub, and gave its botanical name and its common name in French and Italian, its description, hints on care and feeding, and copious quotations about it from authors, both classic and modern, who had discussed it. In 1825 the work went into a second edition, and in 1831 she published a new edition in conjunction with her companion work, *Sylvan Sketches; or, A Companion to the Parks and the Shrubbery; with Illustrations from the Works of the Poets* (London, 1831).

By 1817 Claire had developed into a very attractive young lady of nineteen. She had begun to take a real interest in her appearance, and even Godwin was enough impressed to write to his wife, "You will, I believe, be pleased to hear that Jane is taking to new habits: she wears stays, and dresses herself every day becomingly and with care: this at the entreaty of Shelley and Mary."[23] Thornton Hunt, the eldest son of Leigh, first came to know her at this time, when he was seven, and he later described her as "a girl of great ability, strong feelings, lively temper, and, though not regularly handsome, of brilliant appearance."[24] Those who knew her were enchanted with her voice, and she was considered among her friends to be an authority on music.[25] She had been

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[23] Paul, op. cit., II, 250. On the other hand, shortly after this, Mary was trying to convince Marianne Hunt to leave off her stays.--Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 28.

[24] Thornton Hunt, "Shelley: By One who Knew Him," Atlantic Monthly, XI (February, 1863) 187.

[25] Byron's poem "Stanzas for Music" is dated 28 March, before he was with Claire in Switzerland. The evidence that it was inspired by Claire is inconclusive, although he certainly knew her by 28 March. It is easy to make a facile transfer of the simile "like music on the waters" to the later known excursions and music on the lake at Geneva. The lines sound as though they had been inspired by a lovely voice, however, and knowing that Claire possessed such a voice one can imagine that she might have had something to do with the inception of the poem.

writing, too, for by October Shelley was unsuccessfully offering her book to London publishers.[26]

Late in September and again in November Shelley and Claire went down to London together.[27] By October Shelley had made up his mind to go to Italy, but it was to be five months before the *ménage* was actually on its way. It was decided that because little Alba's (or as she was for a while called, Clara, until Byron substituted Allegra) presence in the family was a constant threat to Shelley's reputation and because as the daughter of a peer she would have advantages which the Shelleys could never offer, the child should be sent to Byron. But to "send" a baby to Italy was no simple matter. In fact, as Mary understood, "Clare although she in a blind manner sees the necessity of it, does not wish her to go and will instinctively

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[26] Julian *Works*, IX, 248. This is all that is known of this work. It is doubtful that after Byron's merciless scorn she would have continued the novel which she had showed to him. It is more probable that contrary to what has been generally assumed Claire went ahead and finished the tale of terror which she had undertaken at the same time that Mary began *Frankenstein*. --See *The Diary of Dr. John William Polidori, 1816, Relating to Byron, Shelley, etc.*, edited by William Michael Rossetti (London, 1911).

[27] Godwin MSS. From 21 to 24 November the two of them were daily at Skinner Street, although none of Mary's letters for this period survive.

place all kinds of difficulties in the way of our as it is very difficult task."[28]

Claire was, in fact, deeply happy with her child. She now had an object on which she could lavish her affection and attention, and she no longer needed to demand so much attention for herself. When the baby was just a year old she took great delight in describing her to Byron, with her "pretty eyes of a deep dazzling blue,"[29] the curls which made the back of her head look quite divine, and the "little square chin divided in the middle like your own." She tried to visualize her darling with her father:

> My affections are few & therefore strong--the extreme solitude in which I live has concentrated them to one point and that point is my lovely child. I study her pleasure all day long --she is so fond of me that I hold her in my arms till I am nearly falling on purpose to delight her. We sleep together and if you knew the extreme happiness I feel when she nestles close to me, in listening to our regular breathing together, I could tear my flesh in twenty thousand different directions to ensure her good and when I fear for her residing with you it is not the dread I have to commence the long series of painful anxiety I know I shall have to endure it is lest I should behold her sickly & wasted with improper management lest I should live to hear that you neglected her. My dearest friend if all this while your feelings are good and gentle then have I done you an irreparable harm in thus suspecting you.[30]

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[28] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 36.

[29] This word has been mis-read "day-time" blue.

[30] Murray MSS. Parts of this letter, not including the passage quoted, have been published in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., pp. 230-233.

The chances are that Claire did far more harm to herself than to Byron in writing to him interminably in this tone. "This long tirade," as she well knew he would consider it, was as usual tactless and a little embarrassing in its intimacy. But tactlessness and candor went together and were much the same thing, and for this reason Claire's letters at this period give a remarkably clear picture of her feelings.

On 17 January 1818 Claire again began to keep a journal. It is impossible to tell whether she had kept a journal at all since 1814, for it is possible that one had been lost and probable that if Claire kept one at all for any part of the period of her relations with Byron she would eventually have destroyed it. It is certain, however, that she had not kept one for the whole time, for her first entry in the new journal proclaims, "I have long wished to keep one regularly and I will now again try to do it."[31]

This journal of 1818 reveals a calm and contented Claire. There are many references in it to "my Darling" Allegra, and though most of them have been inked out, after more than a

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[31] Ashley MSS. Sixteen pages from this journal, two from the front and fourteen from the back, became detached at some time after Dowden had used it, and they are now in the possession of Mr. Pforzheimer. I have consulted them in the photostats which were made for Dr. White and which have been deposited in the library of Duke University.

hundred years of aging they are now generally pretty legible.[32]

At Great Marlow Claire played the piano which Shelley had commissioned Vincent Novello to obtain for her, read Latin and Italian, walked about the countryside, and spent many hours playing with her child. It was to this newly born Claire that Shelley unquestionably wrote his beautiful lines to Constantia, which have immortalized her at her best.[33] But it was a passing harmony, fated to last only in the poem, for finally the great damp house at Marlow found a buyer, and the family moved *en masse* up to London.

Claire and the Shelleys continued the spirit of their gay life in London, for they went about a great deal to the galleries and exhibits, the opera and the zoo. Shelley, wrote Hogg (presumably to John Frank Newton, the vegetarian) "is now in Town arrayed in purple and fine linen, in a blue coat & white waistcoat; for three weeks he has been a punctual attendant at the Opera; he condescends to admire Madame Fodor

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[32] Crossed-out passages generally illegible in the photostats are nearly always quite clear in the MSS because of the conspicuous differences in the aging of various inks. Burned sections of the journals, now illegible in the repaired MSS in the British Museum, are legible in the photostats of the Ashley MSS. in the Duke Library.

[33] The fullest discussions of whether or not Claire was Shelley's Constantia are in Marcel Kessel, "Shelley's 'To Constantia Singing,'" *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 January 1935 and Keith Glenn, "Shelley's 'To Constantia Singing,'" *ibid.*, 11 April 1935. Shelley probably borrowed the name from Constantia Dudley, the heroine of Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond*.

& Mademoiselle Milanie & to haunt Exhibitions, Concerts & Theatres."[34] Claire stayed at the Hunts' with Allegra, but she ventured out a great deal and visited with Horace Smith, Hogg, Peacock, Hazlitt, Vincent Novello, Mary Lamb, and John Keats.[35]

Then on 9 March the children were christened--the baby Alba was now Clara Allegra[36]--and on 11 March they set out for Dover, to present Allegra to her father and to seek a climate more favorable to Shelley's health.

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The party which moved across France to Italy in the spring of 1818 consisted of five adults and three children--Mary and Shelley with their William and Clara, Claire with her Allegra, and two servants, Elise (who stopped for a while at Chambéry to see her mother, her father-in-law, and her own little girl) and the second servant, engaged at Marlow, Amelia "Milly" Shields.

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[34] The Athenians: Being Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson Hogg and His Friends Thomas Love Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Others, edited by Walter Sidney Scott (London, 1943), p. 45.

[35] Ashley MSS. and Mary Shelley's Journal, pp. 91-93.

[36] Allegra's baptismal certificate has been published by Iris Origo, Allegra (London, 1935) p. 30.

On 17 April Byron sent a letter to Shelley which was received on 21 April. "Letter from Albé. Nothing but discomfort," Claire noted in her journal, and she sat down to write a long letter to tell Byron that she could not consider sending Allegra to him so long as she was not to be treated as the child's mother. Byron had obviously tried to arrange that Claire never be allowed to see Allegra once she had parted from her. But he finally agreed that as long as he himself did not have to encounter Claire, she would be allowed to visit her child. On 24 April Shelley, walking out to the post office in Milan, met a Venetian full of gossip and bad news about Byron's life in Venice. "Albe! Albe everywhere!" wrote Mary,[1] but after the receipt of his letter of 28 April Elise set out with Allegra for Venice, in defiance of the evil omens, on the day after Claire's twentieth birthday.

Claire's letters of this period show that she was far from being resigned to a permanent separation from Byron. She called him always "my dearest friend," and obsequiously bent herself double to beg of him the small favors of a kind word or a lock of her little girl's hair. Despite Shelley's firm

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[1] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 97. Byron's nickname Albé may have been derived from Albanian or from the pronunciation of his initials, L. B., or from a combination of these. Perhaps a third influence was the title of Madame Sophie Cottin's popular epistolary novel Claire d'Albe, composed largely of letters from the virtuous Claire, as she succumbs to a guilty passion, addressed to her confidante Elise. The Shelleys unquestionably knew the book since it had been one of Harriet Shelley's favorites, and the triple coincidence of the names cannot possibly have escaped them.

and patient warning, she still kept her eyes tightly sealed to the gulf which separated her from Byron, and she blindly wrote: "Yet, my dear friend, why should my presence tease you? Why might not the father and mother of a child whom both so tenderly love meet as friends?"[2] Her passionate attachment to Allegra kept her fighting the battle long after it had been lost.

In May the Shelley party came down to Pisa, stayed two days, and moved on to Leghorn, where they looked up the old friend of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Gisborne, with her husband John and her son by a former marriage, the engineer Henry Reveley.[3] The six of them made a congenial party, and they took long daily walks and visited constantly together until on 11 June the Shelley party moved into Signor Chiappa's house, Casa Bertini, at the popular Bagni di Lucca.

At Bagni di Lucca the three adults took up horseback riding, a sport popular with the numerous English at that resort. Apparently Claire threw herself into the new pastime with her usual nervous enthusiasm, for she was the one who took the bad falls, one of which was serious enough to injure her knee and

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[2] Murray MSS., partially printed in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 235.

[3] The name is sometimes spelled "Reeveley," both by Godwin (a notoriously bad speller) and by Claire and the Shelleys. This can probably be taken as a clue to the pronunciation.

lay her up for some time.[4] All the activity and the company at the resort were not enough to tranquilize Claire's mind, and once having extracted the promise from Byron that she was to be allowed to see Allegra, she was not content until finally, on 17 August, Shelley consented to accompany her to Venice. They began the hard journey immediately, bumping over the rough roads to Florence in a nearly springless cabriolet and then pushing on for three more days of heavy travelling during which they covered sixty miles a day.[5]

It is not necessary here to enter into the details of this visit, with Claire's happy days with Allegra at Este, the arrival of Mary, the death of little Clara, and the kindness of the Hoppners. Byron was very reasonable about the child, as long as he did not have to see Claire, and he was delighted to have Shelley's company. Even the servants got along well; it was here that the Shelley's dishonest but temporarily useful factotum Paolo, who had accompanied Shelley from Bagni di Lucca, met for the first time the Swiss maid Elise, with whom he was later to run off. When the Shelleys and Claire left Este on 5 November to travel to Naples by way of Florence and Rome, they took their own horses, with Paolo

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[4] _Letters of Mary W. Shelley_, I, 56.

[5] Julian _Works_, IX, 322-323.

to drive, and were accompanied by Elise and Milly Shields.[6]

When they arrived in Naples on 1 December Mary was completely exhausted by the wearying trip. Her journal reveals her as constantly tired. Claire, as usual, was little help; Mary simply ignored her in her daily journal-writing, undoubtedly wishing that she could have a comparable rest from her in her daily life. The three months in Naples were filled with sight-seeing excursions--to Herculaneum, Vesuvius, the Bay of Baiæ, Pompeii, Paestum, and half a dozen more.[7] On the last day of February they departed for Rome, and on 5 March they saw the Coliseum again.

In Rome Mary felt that she had begun to live again, and Shelley's letters--some of the best travel letters ever written--testify to his own revitalization. He immediately started writing poetry; his literary *annus mirabilis* was the year 1819. Mary took up painting, and a music master was engaged for Claire. Although she practiced as much as seven hours a day and did not neglect her reading,[8] Claire, like Mary and

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[6] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 60. By 12 March Mary was writing to Marianne Hunt that William had quite forgotten his French, because Elise had married Paolo, that "rogue of an Italian servant," had turned Catholic, and had gone to live in Florence.--*Ibid.*, I, 64. Venice had, indeed, quite spoiled her.

[7] For a discussion of the Neapolitan mystery, see Appendix A.

[8] But in later years Claire crossed out many of the journal records of her reading, not caring to have it known that she had explored such indecorous works as Boccaccio's tales and the memoirs of Ninon de l'Enclos and Madame de Pompadour.

Shelley, found time for a great deal of sightseeing. Two days after their arrival they moved from the Villa di Parigi to Palazzo Verospi, Corso 300, and only two days after they were established there Claire recorded a visit to the Signora Dionigi, who lived a few houses away.[9]

Visiting occupied Claire and the Shelleys much of the time that they were in Rome. They avoided the English tourists, of whom they had seen enough at Bagni di Lucca, and Shelley and Claire found the Italian *conversazioni*, or musical evenings, very much to their taste.[10] The literary set gathered quite apart from the more fashionable society; they made no attempt to dress up for their *soirées*, and their refreshments were generally limited to water. At least it was that way at the Signora Dionigi's. When Lady Murray, the wife of the publisher, visited Rome two years after the Shelleys, she was not frightened off by the austerity:

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[9] The Signora Marianna Candida Dionigi (1756-1826) lived at Corso 310. For a biographical sketch, see Appendix C.

[10] Claire was amused one evening at the unfortunate Englishmen quite out of their depth at the Signora Dionigi's, "who after having crossed their legs & said nothing the whole evening rose all up at once, made their bows & filed off." --Ashley MSS., 28 March 1819. The *conversazioni* were certainly not to everyone's taste, and it was not only the English who suffered. A Monsieur Ducos, arriving in Rome a few months after the Shelleys had left, reported his view of a *conversazione*: "ce serait une *soirée* à Paris, un *rout* à Londres, et, que je l'ai éprouvé, de l'ennui partout."--[B. Ducos], *Itinéraire et Souvenirs d'un Voyage en Italie en 1819 et 1820* (Paris,1829), II, 122.

> I was introduced to Madame Dionigi's, a very agreeable elderly lady, who lived up two pair of stairs, which her friends crept up in the dark, and then entered a room lighted by a common lamp with three burners, and one wax taper. She received company every evening.[11]

Mary Shelley was not very favorably impressed with the Signora, whom she described as "very old, very miserly & very mean."[12] It is easy to see from Lady Murray's description what Mary meant. But for Claire the case was different, and her journal records visits to the Signora's evening parties on nearly half of the nights between her arrival in Rome and the Signora's departure on 27 April. Claire had the tremendous advantage of speaking Italian well--one remembers fom Medwin's high praise for her linguistic ability[13]--and she was able to enjoy the conversation which many English visitors missed. Also, she was delighted with the music. Two of the musicians who played occasionally at the Signora's, the Fanellis from Arpino, called upon the Shelleys, and it is probable that Shelley's acquaintance with the artists Milani and Delicati also stemmed from the evenings with Signora Dionigi.

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[11] A Journal of a Tour in Italy (London, privately printed, n.d.), III, 80-81.

[12] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 69.

[13] Medwin, op. cit., p. 169: "[she] spoke French and Italian, particularly the latter, with all its nuances and niceties." This was in 1820.

She was in her sixty-third year when the Shelleys met her and was nearing the end of a distinguished and fruitful career as artist and archaeologist.

The Signora Marianna was a devoted churchwoman, and in her position as a connoisseur of music she introduced Claire and the Shelleys to the fine church music of Rome. On 12 March she conducted them to Saint Peter's to hear mass and a sermon from the celebrated Padre Pacifico. As Claire reported it:

> The voice of the Padre is his chiefest excellence--powerful & musical--his Italian is perfect The music of the Mass is divine and the voices of the Singing Boys sounded in this vast edifice like flutes. We saw the Pope Pius VII a poor old man upon the brink of the Grave and many cardinals almost as old and trembling.[14]

On 28 March they met a cardinal in person at one of the Signora's conversazioni, and on the next day the Signora took Mary and Claire to a friend's house, where they heard the "Celebrated Miserere." Claire was enraptured, enchanted. "Nothing," she wrote, "was ever so beautiful--words cannot express it for they could only do so by turning to Music themselves--Nothing but itself can be its parellel [sic]." They were so eloquent on their return that Shelley himself went on the next day to hear it and was delighted. During Holy Week they all went several times to Saint Peter's for illuminations and music, and on Easter day they went there for

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[14] This and the material in the following paragraph are drawn from the Ashley MSS.

the funzioni and afterwards to the Loggia of the Signora Dionigi to watch the fireworks at the Castello Sant' Angelo across the river.

For Claire, all this represented the richness and formal order which were to draw her at last, in her old age, into the church of Rome. For a little while in 1819 her journals reflect her recapturing of the breathless enthusiasm of her first trip to the continent: she reacted towards the music of the church as she had once reacted towards the Alps. And it is interesting to note that esthetically Shelley was moved by it, because on the whole he was reacting in quite a different way towards the Roman Catholic church as a whole. In spite of his propensity to admire, he finally admitted to Peacock that Saint Peter's exhibited in its interior "littleness on a large scale."[15] Although he regretted missing the Easter Miserere in the Sistine Chapel, at a time when he thought there would be no tickets available (was it the Signora Dionigi who eventually procured some?), he still maintained that Raphael and Guido were the only results worth preserving from "all the Xtianity had suffered to spring forth from its dark and pernicious Chaos."[16]

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[15] Julian Works, X, 41.

[16] Ibid., X, 47.

Shelley's revived interest in the Roman Catholic church, an interest nourished by the Signora Dionigi's assistance, led, in the spring of that year, to his writing of the Cenci, a play in which he could present a powerful instance of wickedness in alliance with the church against virtue. Mary had made a copy of the manuscript of the Cenci family history just a year before, and on 22 April she and Claire went with Shelley to visit the supposed portrait of Beatrice Cenci in the Palazzo Colonna. On 11 May they visited Casa Cenci, and a conversation, probably at the Signora Dionigi's, revealed to Shelley the interesting fact that nineteenth-century Italians were still deeply interested in the sordid account.

Claire shared actively in Shelley's reawakened interest in the Cencis. On 14 May her journal discloses that she was rereading the manuscript account of the family. Just after this she wrote the first letter to Byron in which the note of bitterness and disillusionment towards him was allowed to appear. Word had come to her that Allegra was not well in the atmosphere of Venice, that Byron was leading une vie terrible, and that he was seriously considering allowing the child to be adopted by the rich Mrs. Vavasour. Claire wrote to ask if he would always be living with "that Fornara," and to express her fear that he would die of a fever from the life he was leading. Quite rightly she said, "I know that every word that falls from my mouth is serpents or toads to you." She sensed disaster, too, reflected in the letters she occasionally received from the Hoppners. A whole year before

the scandal spread by Paolo and Elise, the ground was obviously prepared for its favorable reception.

> Of both Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner I could never say enough. Their kindness came just in time to save both me & Allegra from drowning for I had begun to despair & to think there was nothing else good in the world beside ourselves. I fancy they dislike me merely because I like them. Did you ever read the history of the Cenci's a most frightful & horrible story?

Then, realizing that there must be some limit upon the expression of her bitterness, Claire cancelled, but not quite to the point of illegibility, her next sentence: "I am sorely afraid to say that in the elder Cenci you may behold yourself in twenty years but if I live Allegra shall never be a Beatrice."[17]

Claire was unpleasantly surprised one evening at the Signora Dionigi's to encounter the man she had hoped never to see, the Reverend Colonel Calicot Finch. He had known the Gisbornes fairly well in 1817 and apparently had interested but not pleased them, for they solicited information about him from Mary and received from her a very catty account.[18] He had known Byron, though probably not so intimately as he had allowed

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[17] Murray MSS. Claire's terror of unnatural relations between Byron and his daughter had its counterpart in the gossip of the day. See, for instance, *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot, 1820-1832*, edited by Francis Bamford and the Duke of Wellington (London, 1950), I, 173-174.

[18] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 68-69.

it to be supposed, and since he was a notorious gossip it is no wonder that Claire was constantly avoiding him.[19]

At the end of April the Signora Dionigi left Rome;[20] just before her departure the Shelleys noticed, while riding in the Borghese Gardens, a person who looked very like their old London acquaintance, Amelia Curran. Having determined that it was really she, they left a card for her the next day, and a few days later, on 27 April, the very day that the Signora Dionigi left, Amelia came to pay them a call. She was with them nearly every day thereafter, for as long as they remained in Rome, and on 7 May Claire and the Shelleys moved next door to her, to Via Sistina 65, the last house on the Trinità de' Monti, close to the gardens of the Villa Medici.

Amelia Curran was a good deal older than Mary and Claire, who had known her as a frequent visitor to Skinner Street from the early days of their childhood. Her father, the witty and eloquent Irish judge and politician, champion of the United

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[19] She encountered him twice later, 13 February and 8 March 1820. For further information about the self-styled colonel, see Elizabeth Nitchie's amusing biographical study, based on the voluminous Finch MSS. in the Bodleian, The Reverend Colonel Finch (New York, 1940).

[20] The Shelleys gave her two letters of introduction to their friends, but it is uncertain that either was presented. One was to the Gisbornes (Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 69) and the other Sophia Stacey and her travelling companion Miss Jones (Julian Works, X, 138-139). Claire recorded a receipt of a letter from her on 19 September 1820.--Ashley MSS.

Irishmen, was a lifelong friend of Godwin and one of the idols of Shelley's youth. But the man whom Shelley had visited in Dublin in 1812, the man who had influenced his Address to the Irish People, had, like two of Shelley's other juvenile idols, Soutney and Wordsworth, turned apostate, and had been appointed Master of the Rolls. Amelia, the oldest girl in a large family, had had to live with the reputation of her youngest sister, Sarah, who had gained a tragic but romantic fame by her attachment to the glamorous hero of the United Irishmen, Robert Emmett, which led to her eventual early death in Sicily "of a broken heart." Sarah was well known to the devotees of Tom Moore as the heroine of his pathetic ballad "She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps."[21]

Poor Amelia apparently had little in her of the heroine of a sentimental song, but apparently she had not been entirely unattractive in her youth. Aaron Burr kept company with her quite steadily on his 1811-1812 visit to London, and he described her to his Theodosia:

> I have been much gratified by meeting Curran. His social talents are equal to his forensic. His daughter Amelia, who lives in this city, is equally interesting. Nous verrons. She has all the genius and eloquence of her father, and the vivacity, the ingenuousness, and the sensibility of her sex and her country.[22]

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[21] John Andrew Hamilton in DNB s.v. "Curran, John Philpot."

[22] Correspondence of Aaron Burr and His Daughter Theodosia, p. 333.

Harriet Shelley would have said that Burr had been "taken in," for she disliked Amelia immediately and described her as a coquette, "the most abominable thing in the world."[23]

Miss Curran had retired into spinster life by the time the Shelleys encountered her in Rome in 1819. She was trying her hand at painting, but not very successfully. Nevertheless, it is upon her dilettante efforts that those interested in Shelley and Claire must rely for the only entirely authenticated portraits.[24] The Shelleys drew her very close to them for a few weeks in Rome. Claire said she would remember a trip with her to Tivoli on 13 May as one of the pleasantest days of her life. And Amelia was on hand to share with the family the heartbreak of the illness and death of little William Shelley.

At some point, certainly after the Tivoli excursion, Claire quarreled with Amelia, as it was her temperament to quarrel with nearly everybody she had known or was to know, and they parted with undisguised hard feelings. A little over a year later Mary wrote to her, "Claire desires (not remembrances--if they are not pleasant) however she sends a proper message & says she w[oul]d be obliged to you if you let her have her picture."[25] Twenty-four years later Claire wrote to Mary, who

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[23] Julian Works, IX, 41.

[24] Amelia Curran's portrait of Shelley is in the National Portrait Gallery; the one of Claire hangs now at Newstead Abbey, and the best reproduction is the one in Grylls, op. cit., facing p. 130.

[25] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 114.

was back in Rome, to tell her that she hated the idea of Mary's staying with Amelia, who was still, after all those years, living at Via Sistina 64.[26]

Immediately after the death of little William, the Shelleys and Claire packed up and left Rome, where they had all, for a short time, been reasonably content. For a while they planned to summer in Naples, probably to spend the time with Elena Adelaide, but instead they headed north to a cooler summer and the company of the Gisbornes. By 24 June they were settled at the Viletta Valsovano, near Monte Nero outside Leghorn, and at once a music master, Signor Squillone, was engaged for Claire. She studied both "thorough base" and, three times a week, singing, for a fee that seemed ridiculously low after the tuition in Rome.[27]

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[26] Abinger MSS., PM. 6 April 1843. Some idea of the isolation of Amelia's life in the interval can be gleaned from Lady Morgan's diary. On 4 February 1820 she wrote from Rome: "With great difficulty I have at last got to Miss Curran; she leads the life of a hermit. She is full of talent and intellect, pleasant, interesting, and original; and she paints like an artist."--Lady Morgan (Sidney Owenson), *Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence* (London, 1862), II, 130. Lady Morgan went on to say that in 1822 Amelia went to Paris, but that she had returned to Rome, fixed her residence there, and become a Catholic. That she was not entirely the hermit here described can be ascertained from Godwin's diary, which showed that she kept in close touch with him and was in England in 1829-1830. In 1829, at a time when Claire, too, was in London, Mary paid a visit to Amelia, and on 1 July 1830 Godwin took his wife to see an exhibit of her paintings.--Godwin MSS. Though not completely withdrawn from the world, Amelia had, it seems, kept very seriously and steadily at her work year in and year out, scarcely guessing that her immortality would rest on two of her early amateur attempts.

[27] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 77.

On 4 September Charles Clairmont arrived from a fifteen months' tour of Spain, and Shelley put him straight to work as Spanish instructor. Mrs. Gisborne and the whole family were soon "Calderonizing." On the sixteenth, Madame Merveilleux du Plantis called with her daughter Zoide and stayed to tea.[28] She seems to have recently arrived with her two girls, Zoide and Louise, from a trip to England, for Godwin had entertained first the "2 young Du Plantis" (21 January 1819) and then the mother (8 March) in London.[29] In 1816 she had kept a lodging house in Leghorn, where the Reverend Colonel Finch had stayed,[30] and she was going on in 1819 to open one in Florence, to which establishment the Shelleys and Claire moved early in October.

En route to Florence they stopped off for two days in Pisa to call on Mrs. Mason, who as Margaret King, daughter of the second earl of Kingston, had been a student of Mary Wollstonecraft, and as Lady Mountcashell had been a friend of Godwin.

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[28] *Mary Shelley's Journal*, p. 124.

[29] Godwin MSS.

[30] In his journal Finch gives a colorful account of her background. Her first husband had been a medical man, Mr. Partridge, and her second, the captain of a frigate in the service of Louis XVIII and in addition a Knight of Saint Louis. Presumably the captain was dead, for Madame Merveilleux supported her two girls by renting lodgings and giving lessons, and she suffered painfully from the unfeeling treatment she received from her unappreciative English patrons.--Ritchie, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

The two girls had undoubtedly met her at Skinner Street, but for Shelley it was a first meeting and the beginning of a firm and lasting friendship. For Charles too she was ready to attempt assistance, even after so brief an acquaintance. It was as if they had always been bound in friendship.[31]

The purpose of the Shelleys' trip to Florence was to obtain the services of the Scotch surgeon Dr. Bell for Mary's confinement. They had come to know him in Rome and had been pleased with him. He had attended William in his last illness, at which time Claire had referred to him as "even in London one of the first English Surgeons."[32] Bell was planning to follow the Princess Paulina Borghese[33] to the Bagni di Lucca, and he would thus be able to attend Mary in Florence near by. His best-laid plans, however, somehow went wrong, for Mary had her baby without his assistance.[34]

In Florence on 2 October the Shelleys settled into the house kept by Madame Merveilleux, the Palazzo Marini, Via

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[31] For a fuller account of Lady Mountcashell, including her relationship with Claire and the Shelleys, see Appendix B.

[32] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 72.

[33] The beautiful sister of Napoleon, familiar to all tourists in the reclining statue by Canova at the Villa Borghese.

[34] By the spring of the following year Dr. Bell's fortunes were at a low ebb. On 15 March 1820 Captain J. J. L. Kely wrote from Rome to the Reverend Colonel Finch: "Dr. Bell is here and in all respects in a bad way. It is currently reported that he and his wife (Miss McGee found a husband) are absolutely starving!!!" --Bodleian MS Finch d.9.

Valfonda 4395. Zoide was away part of the time in an unsuccessful attempt as a governess to the Webbs, and it was Louise of whom they saw the most. Landladies' daughters had a fatal attraction for Charles, and not two weeks after they were settled he was in love again. "Mad. Merveilleux is quiet and we only meet her now and then by chance," Shelley wrote to Maria Gisborne. He added:

> Her daughter not so fair but I fear as cold as the snowy Florimel in Spenser is in and out of love with Charles as the winds happen to blow, and Charles who at the moment I write is in a high state of transitory contentment, is setting off to Vienna in a day or two.[33]

But Charles's day or two stretched itself out to almost a month, and he set out for Austria on about the tenth of November, just before the birth of Percy Florence on the twelfth.

By 28 December it was clear that Madame Merveilleux was not the retiring woman they had thought. Mary wrote to Maria that she "might go on exceedingly well & gain if she had the brains of a goose but her head is a sive [sic] & her temper worse than wildfire it is gunpowder & blows up every thing." In the same letter she told about their seeing a great deal of Louise, a good and clever girl, but lazy. "What say you to her jilting poor Charles & marrying the steam boat (or its maker)," she suggested jokingly. "Tell him (if you are not

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[33] Julian Works, X, 93.

afraid) that she has lovely hair pretty eyes--nice neck & shoulders for the rest non c'è male."[36]

It was to be expected that Claire, with her excitability and congenital tendency towards scenes, would eventually provide tinder for one of Madame Du Plantis's explosions. If in this case it turned out to be a time bomb, detonated after the Shelleys and Claire had returned to Pisa, it was probably preceded by smaller-scale fireworks at the Palazzo Marini, although on the whole Claire seemed to get along well with the girls and liked to ride out with them and to play at snowballs.

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[36] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 92. It is generally stated that Claire had refused an offer of marriage from Henry Reveley. In one of her notebooks (N. V., possibly in the possession of Maurice Buxton Forman) Claire wrote of herself, "In 1818, she refused an offer of marriage from P--; he knew her whole history. In 1820, she tried to like Mr. Reveley, who made her an offer of marriage; but she found she could not, and refused him."--Dowden, *op. cit.*, II, 396n. In the face of repeated instances of Claire's wandering from the facts in her later letters and notebooks, I hesitate to accept this statement as conclusive without further evidence. It is true that Claire behaved very discreetly towards Henry and took great pains to make her position perfectly clear: "Clare & Shelley send their best love to you & I would say to Henry but that would not do from the young lady so take out her name & only *remember her kindly* to him." *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 63. Henry seems to have been of an extremely docile temperament. Mary joked about him gently in a letter to the Hunts as a pattern of good boys: "he is only thirty years of age and always does as he is bid."--*Ibid.*, I, 77. To Shelley he came to appear pathetic in the extreme. Even when most disgusted with the Gisborne family over the steamboat fiasco, Shelley had not the heart to include Henry, "so very miserable, and such a whipped and trembling dog."--Julian *Works*, X, 226. But Henry finally made good, in spite of them all, married a sister of Copley Fielding in 1824, and later went to Western Australia, where he was "practically the founder of the city of Perth."--Dowden, *op. cit.*, II, 209n.

On 8 February she wrote to Louise from Pisa, and one can only guess at the contents of the letter from its repercussions.[37] Perhaps Claire suggested that if Louise really loved Charles she would set out after him. At any rate, Charles heard of the letter in Vienna, and on 26 February wrote to Mary and Claire that Madame Du Plantis was on the war path:

> First she says that Claire has written a most indecent letter to her daughter, from which her virtuous Child turned with horror, & foreswore every alliance with the Author; next says she, independently of this, "circumstances of another nature, respecting yourself have reached our ears, which render it necessary to break off all correspondence with you."[38]

He went on to report that she "proceeds to dash Claire in a most furious manner, vowing, (which is very wicked if it be true) that Claire has taken away her Chiroplast, *Case and all!*"[39] Charles swore that he was as much in love with Louise as ever, but that he was not ass enough to allow the mother to treat him any longer as she pleased.

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[37] Ashley MSS.

[38] Bodleian MS. Shelley Adds. d.5.

[39] *Ibid*. The chiroplast was a mechanical device to assist the student of piano to acquire a "secure and graceful position of both hands." It was fitted to the hands of the student in such a way that it prevented his straightening his fingers.--J. B. Logier, *An Authentic Account of the Examination of Pupils, Instructed in the New System of Musical Education* (London, 1818). The system was the subject of a heated controversy in Dublin, where it was first introduced, and in London. As a governess in Russia Claire was still attempting to ground herself in its fundamentals.--Ashley MSS.

The case of the missing chiroplast had been solved before the arrival of the letter on 8 March, for on 11 February Claire had received an "impertinent letter" from Madame Du Plantis about it, which was answered on the spot--one hopes in a calmer hand than the one in which Claire scribbled to Mrs. Gisborne:

> The stupid wretch of a Procaccio took the Box to the English Consul's instead of to your house. *Mary says* will you attend to her inclosed letter--and send it by the bearer as soon as possible. May the very sight of the Consul's house cause this brute of a Procaccio an indigestion--*Mary says*--will you send to the British Consul for the box which had a letter directed to Signor Enrico Reveley and when you have [exam]ined the Contents send it back as another beast Madame Wonderful at Florence is raging for it. To enquire for the letter which went with it that explains that we want a drawing to be made of the Instrument from which such another might be made.[40]

The waves of wrath subsided slowly into waves of laughter. At Casa Silva, the home of Mrs. Mason, a mysterious "Plan of Capuccini" for Madame Du Plantis was discussed, and the last to be heard of her was a final letter, received by Claire on March 23, from "the impudent Louise" and her mother.[41]

During eight months of 1819 there was not a word from anyone in Venice about Allegra. For a while Shelley debated whether he ought not go, even at great inconvenience, straight

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[40] Abinger MSS. The original explanatory letter which accompanied the chiroplast is printed in Julian *Works*, X, 146. It is now for the first time comprehensible. The carrier's mistake in delivery is easily explained when one notices that the letter is addressed "Al Signor Enrico Reveley, Casa Ricci, Vincino il Console Inglese." For the note on the dating of the letter, see Appendix F.

[41] Ashley MSS.

to Byron to attempt to crack the wall of silence. But finally a letter to the Venetian vice-consul, Mr. Dorville, drew a reply that satisfied them temporarily.[42]

Meanwhile, Claire made great progress with her singing lessons under her excellent Florentine master, Pelleschi. Mary's letters in November and December record her increasing delight at Claire's progress. When Sophia Stacey and Miss Jones arrived, Claire was in her element, sharing her teacher with them and acting as interpreter. In December Mary cited Claire's splendid progress with her sol fa's as their best reason for not quitting the cold of Florence for the more temperate climate of the coast. In addition to being a splendid music master, Gaspero Pelleschi was received at the Shelleys' in the role of a welcome guest, as is illustrated by Claire's record that after a full morning of lessons, "Pelleschi comes in the Evening & sings."[43] So strong was the appeal of Claire's musical advancement to the Shelleys that Maria Gisborne used it as one of the inducements to bring them to Leghorn rather than to Pisa in the spring: "Should you return here, we can procure a far better singing master for the little busy bee than

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[42] Julian *Works*, X, 97. The actual reply has not survived.

[43] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 85, 88, and 89; and Ashley MSS., 5 January 1820. Gaspero Pelleschi was also a composer. See, for example, his "L'Ombra di Dante: Cantata di Francesco Gonnella, posta in musica dal Maestro Gaspero Pelleschi," in Guiseppe Gonnelli, *Elogio di Lorenzo Ghiberti* (Firenze, 1822).

she had last summer--the Valentissima Toornis. I am rejoiced to hear of her rapid progress."[44]

Pisa won out, however, and on 26 January they sailed down the Arno, away from the Florentine winter which Pelleschi called the severest in seventy years. The letter Mary wrote to Mrs. Hoppner on 20 January and the visit they received from Elise on 23 January are mentioned only in Claire's journal, not in Mary's. The fact that Paolo and Elise had settled in Florence gave them one more reason for leaving.

Pisa, when the Shelleys arrived there in 1820, had long since given up competition with Florence and Leghorn and still displayed the same gloomy grandeur which Smollett had observed fifty-five years before. The long quays were silent, and grass grew between the paving stones of the broad streets. Most visitors, then as now, stopped briefly on the northern edge of the city to inspect the Duomo with its adjacent Campo Santo and to gape a while at the campanile before hurrying on to Florence or to the most "English" city in Italy--Leghorn. But the city appealed to Shelley for much the same reasons that Smollett had been drawn to it: "the number of inhabitants is very inconsiderable; and this very circumstance gives it an air of majestic solitude, which is far from being

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[44] Maria Gisborne and Edward E. Williams, p. 60. In the MS of this letter (Abinger MSS.) I read Toomiss instead of Toorniss.

unpleasant to a man of a contemplative turn of mind."[45] It was to be a home for Shelley, from which he never ventured very far during the rest of his life.

The Shelleys' life in Pisa centered in the household of Mrs. Mason, at Casa Silva, Via Mala Gonella, not far from their own house on the Lung' Arno, Casa Frasi. There must have been one unpleasant aspect of their early acquaintance, but hardly more than a ripple in the smooth progress of their friendship: almost immediately it must have been obvious to Mrs. Mason that the stories she had heard from Mrs. Godwin were largely bigoted misrepresentations of the facts. Perhaps this painful revelation was responsible for Claire's dream the second night after her arrival: "Horrid dream about Skinner Street & apoplectic fits."[46]

On the whole, however, the weather, like the conversation, was "exquisitely warm and sunny," and Claire found much to amuse her. She plunged enthusiastically into the rich library at Casa Silva, coming up with great batches of pamphlets about the Irish Rebellion, with which Mrs. Mason had been closely associated, and reading in rapid succession writings of Schlegel, Chateaubriand, Rousseau, Tom Paine, Locke, and Tacitus, along with the usual Calderon, travel accounts, and books

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[45] Tobias Smollett, Travels Through France and Italy (London, 1766), II, 40. Compare Leigh Hunt's description of Pisa in The Liberal, I (London, 1822), pp. 97-120.

[46] Ashley MSS.

about the theater. Her journal for the months during which she was with Mrs. Mason is full of lengthy entries--half of them reading notes and the other half detailed accounts of Mrs. Mason's delightful anecdotes. She had time, too, for her usual music lessons, now conducted by a Signor Zanetti, to which on 16 March she added dancing, in which she apparently took her lessons at Casa Silva, possibly sharing with eleven-year-old Laurette the services of the dancing-master Legerino. Before she left Pisa Claire added another instructor, Sforzi, but whether in music or in some other art she did not say.

Mary and Claire were ever at a loss for words to describe their distaste for the native Italians,[47] and apparently at

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[47] See Mary's letter to Marianne Hunt, *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 96. Similarly, Claire describes in her journal, 25 September 1820, a walk through the streets of Florence: "I see a beggar sitting at his post yawning with *ennui*--another crawling on all fours politely saluting a young washerwoman a bundle on her head & bare footed with *mi rincresce che la Mamma e ammalata*; Greeks with legs folded under them sitting upon the parapets & gazing stupidly upon the muddy current of the canal below--Further I met persons of every country & every costume--and numerous old women ugly hag-ridden beldams rich in nothing but deformities--here men burning coffee before their doors, & there others beating a flock of Mattraesses; violins squeaking, & women singing--Life every where but like to the life that is engendered of putrefaction creeping crawling worms not that wholesome strength of an agricultural product or that animation which is the child of Liberty."--Ashley MSS. This sounds very much like one of the little aristocratic sallies of Shelley, about which the Gisbornes used to tease him. It is all a piece with Claire's attitude towards the *canaille* with whom she and the Shelleys were forced to travel on their descent of the Rhine in 1814.

this time Mrs. Mason shared their aloofness, for she seemed to see few people outside her immediate circle of friends. Their acquaintance with the English was equally limited. Claire's account of her countrymen, whether based entirely on her own observation or reported from a conversation, reveals this self-sufficient isolation in which many of them moved:

> Account of the odd English at present at Pisa. Walter Savage Landor who will not see a single English person. Says he is glad the country produces people of worth but he will have nothing to do with them. Shelley who walks about reading a great quarto Encyclopedia with another volume under his arm. Tatty [Mr. Tighe] who sets potatoes in Pots, & a Mr. Dolby who is rejoicing that he is escaped from England at last although he is 70 some say 80 yrs of age--he is short & thick & goes about with his pockets stuffed out with books, singing, & a pair of spectacles hung by a gold chain round his neck. He is learned & tells every one that he would put on a better coat to visit them in if he had another in the world besides the one he wears.[48]

There were exceptions to the social isolation of the Shelleys and Mrs. Mason and Mr. Tighe. Decidedly not included in the scorn for the Italian rabble were the two remarkable physicians and their families, good friends of Mrs. Mason--Vaccà and Tantini. Simply as a physician Vaccà had to be unusually good to overcome Shelley's enormous prejudice against Italian doctors; in the previous year Mary had written, "we have the most rooted contempt & in case of illness the greatest dread of Italian Medicos."[49] But one of the forces which had drawn them

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[48] Ashley MSS., 5 May 1820.

[49] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 71.

to Pisa had been Mrs. Mason's wholehearted recommendation of Vaccà, and Shelley was delighted to find him not only a wise physician, but a fellow writer, a republican, and an atheist to boot.[50]

Vaccà at once diagnosed Shelley's ill health as nervous in origin and wisely recommended the relaxation of the baths and a relief from medicines. Claire's first reference to him was on 5 February: "Vaccà calls & says I am scrofulous and I say he is ridiculous."[51] Her decisive statement seems to have been prompted by wishful thinking, for her miserable health throughout the following year and her persistent trouble with glands which from time to time needed to be opened indicate that the condition may easily have been the tubercular one diagnosed by Vaccà.

When Shelley came to him in 1820, Vaccà was in his prime. He was described in the spring of 1814 as riding a horse with an air that gave one the impression that he would be perfectly

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[50] For a further discussion of the friendship of Vaccà, Mrs. Mason, and Shelley, see Appendix B.

[51] Ashley MSS. For a further discussion of Vaccà and his relationship with Shelley, see Appendix D.

at home on a battlefield.[52] He seemed more a distinguished warrior than a professor. He lived a full and varied life: his mornings were given over to study; the afternoons were divided, two hours of teaching and four of consulting and practice. He found time for the study of agriculture, and on his estates he actually went into the fields and worked like a brother among the laborers.

The doctor was interested also in literature, and he particularly appreciated the works of Lucian, Moliere, Cervantes, and Swift. He joined enthusiastically the salon of Madame de Staël when she was in Pisa in 1816, and his vigorous differences of opinion, his spontaneous laughter, and his improvised sketches provided the salt and pepper of those conversations.

These were the aspects of Vaccà's character and personality which appealed to Shelley, but most important of all he found in the doctor a true humanitarian after his own heart. Three hours every day Vaccà set aside for medical service to the poor of the community. The indigent could always find him at those stated hours for free counsel and care. During the

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[52] The following account is based on Laura Vaccà Giusti, *Andrea Vaccà e la Sua Famiglia* (Pisa, 1878). A few details have been drawn from Luigi Pozzolini, *Miscellanea di Prose e Poesie Italiane* (Firenze, 1845), pp. 2[illegible]-37. Mrs. Angeli has a very interesting account, apparently drawn from a different source or sources, but unfortunately inaccurate in some details. The birth date of Andrea Vaccà, for example, which she gives as 1766, can be verified as 1772 from his tomb in Pisa.--See, nevertheless, Helen Rossetti Angeli, *Shelley and His Friends in Italy* (London, 1911), pp. 110-112.

famine of 1817 he had almost single-handed provided food for the starving population of Montefoscoli. He was gracious to strangers, and took Byron's erstwhile physician Polidori into his home most generously in 1816.[53] It was little wonder that he was called by an Austrian colonel Dio della Medicina,[54] and by Byron, one of the great men of his day.[55]

How much more Andrea Vaccà was to Shelley than just his physician can be seen from Claire's diary:

> Vaccà calls--a very profound & atheistical conversation between him & S[helley] La Signora Maria & il Signor Giovanni [Gisborne] not unmixed with joy at an interview after ten-years absence with his old & liberal friends.
> In the evening they set out for Livorno carrying S[helley] along with them.[56]

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[53] Polidori, op. cit., pp. 204-206.

[54] Ibid., p. 205.

[55] The Works of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1899), II, 324. In the year of Vaccà's death, 1826, Mary Shelley wrote in her review, "The English in Italy," the following tribute to her old friend: "alas! this estimable man is now dead, and we can do no more than consecrate this note to his memory. His talents were of the highest order, and as a practical surgeon he stood in the first rank of his profession. His private virtues secured for him universal esteem; he was gentle, yet full of enthusiasm; a select specimen of Italian virtue and genius."--Op. cit., pp. 332-333n. The effect of his loss on the quiet town of Pisa was obvious even seventeen years after his death. Claire was there in 1833 and wrote to Jane Williams Hogg, "Since Vaccà's death, few strangers come, as there is not a decent doctor in the place, and so it is quite given up to its native dulness." --Abinger MSS., 1 February 1833. Vaccà's monument was designed and executed by the sculptor Thorwaldsen.

[56] Ashley MSS., 21 April 1820.

Another medical family, also friends of Mrs. Mason, a family with whom Claire and the Shelleys became acquainted on their arrival in Pisa, was that of Doctor Tantini. Tantini (1779-1831) was a student and disciple of Francesco Vaccà and the good friend of his son Andrea. The Reverend Colonel Finch had described him in 1817 as "professore di medecina, un uomo garbato, a che è bravo per la litteratura."[57]

La Tantini was a favorite of Mrs. Mason and her little girls, but she appeared to them sometimes to be rather an eccentric, for she was afflicted with schwärmerei, and in her excessive sentimentalism might be found weeping uncontrollably over the death of one of her husband's friends who had died three years before and whom she had never known.[58] Nevertheless, this cannot have been her dominant mood, for Finch saw in her "an agreable unaffected woman, professing taste and judgement,"[59] exactly the kind of woman she would have to be to continue the friend of Mrs. Mason. She had the taste and judgment in 1820 to dismiss that same Reverend Colonel Finch when he became impudent.[60]

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[57] Bodleian MS. Finch d.21., 29 November 1817. Finch's Italian journal-keeping reminds one of Aaron Burr's French.

[58] Ashley MSS., 21 April 1820.

[59] Bodleian MS. Finch d. 21., 16 December 1817.

[60] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 103.

One other acquaintance of Claire and the Shelleys deserves to be mentioned here, if only to clear up the mystery that surrounds her. She is referred to first in Claire's journal on 22 February 1820: "Walk with Laurette [the elder of Mrs. Mason's daughters] to the convent of Santa Chiara to pay a visit to Betsy an English nun."[61] Claire made two more recorded trips to see Betsy "or Suora Ancilla." Then on 7 August Madame Tantini called and had the nun with her. These are the only references to her in all of Claire's journals, which are reasonably complete for the period of 1820 through the summer of 1822.

Yet in her very old age Claire looked back on her friendship with the English Betsy as a very intimate and important one. About the year 1870 Claire spent much of her time in writing lengthy letters to Trelawny about her life and recollections (which were apt to be two different matters). In those letters she summoned up Betsy as a witness that in 1822 Claire's friends considered Byron's behavior about Allegra brutal. Claire maintained that Betsy had recommended the most drastic measures, saying that if she were in Claire's position she would stab or shoot Byron and thereby save the child, even at the cost of her own life.[62] Dowden's statement that Elizabeth Parker, or Sister Ancilla, was an orphan sent by Mrs.

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[61] Ashley MSS.

[62] Grylls, op. cit., p. 141.

Godwin to live with Mrs. Mason, and who had later (i.e. after 1822, the year Dowden was discussing) entered the convent, must also stem from the letters to Trelawny, which are no longer available to scholars.[63]

A major piece of evidence about Elizabeth Parker was found among Claire's papers after her death: a copy in Claire's hand of a supposed letter from Miss Parker to Claire, describing in vivid detail a scene at Casa Silva, in which Shelley flew into a passion about Byron's treatment of Allegra, and in which the possible effectiveness of horsewhipping was discussed.[64]

What Claire could not guess when, fifty years after the occurrence, she "copied" the letter which expressed so vividly her own point of view was that Mrs. Mason had written the story of Elizabeth Parker's history in a letter to Mary Shelley. The letter is with the rest of Mary's papers at Lord Abinger's. In it, Mrs. Mason explained that when she left England for Italy she picked up the girl at the house where she was lodging in London and took her abroad with her as a servant. The girl proved honest, faithful, and intelligent, but unfortunately in Pisa she picked up "the itch." During a stay at the hospital,

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[63] Dowden, op. cit., II, 486-487. I believe these papers to be in the possession of Maurice Buxton Forman, Pretoria, South Africa.

[64] Dowden prints a long excerpt from this letter, with the not unnecessary caveat that it is known only from Claire's copy. --ibid.

whither she had been sent by Vaccà, she came under the influence of an old Capuchine and the nun with whom she lived, who resolved to save her soul. "To shorten my story," continued Mrs. Mason, "she abjured the errors of the Church of England & found rich friends in consequence who paid all the necessary expenses to make her a nun of St. Clare, & she has been above four years in the Hospital where she is highly respected."[65]

In the light of this undeniably authentic account, many of the details of Claire's later story appear manifestly distorted, and many of the others ring unsound. The fact that Elizabeth Parker was an uneducated girl of the servant class, and not a poor orphaned friend of her mother's, makes it improbable that she was, in Claire's words, "my best, firmest and most affectionate friend--and has ever been so."[66] It is strange that her dearest friend should be mentioned only three times (all in 1820) and never again in all the journals and letters. It is of course possible that in her later years, when she herself had joined the Catholic church, Claire may have resumed her acquaintance with the Suora Ancilla, but if that is so, it is strange that there is no mention of her in the voluminous journals kept by Claire's niece Pauline, who lived with Claire in Florence during the last decades of her life.

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[65] Abinger MSS. The letter is undated, but it appears from internal evidence to have been written early in period of her acquaintance with Mary Shelley.

[66] Grylls, _op. cit._, p. 141.

Claire's creation of the sympathetic English friend is very understandable. There had been nobody, really, to take Claire's part actively against Byron, and Elizabeth Parker filled this vacuum. It was naturally necessary for Claire in her account to postpone the entrance of the Parker girl into the convent until after 1822 to render plausible the story of her intimacy at Casa Silva during the most confidential family scenes and her extremely un-Christian attitude toward Byron, when the worst he had done, so far as she could know, was to place Allegra in the convent at Bagnacavallo. The force of wishful thinking, working in Claire's memory over a period of a half a century, is more than adequate to account for her tendency to manipulate the facts. Since the story of "Betsy, the English nun," has been accepted as fact by reputable biographers, it deserves notice as one more example of the unreliability of Claire's writings in her old age.[67]

The peaceful summer in Pisa was disturbed on June 12 by the trouble announced by the single word "Paolo" in Mary's journal. The scandal, apparently in the same form as in Elise's story to the Hoppners, was abroad, and Shelley hoped to crush Foggi by law. He moved with Mary and Claire into the Gisborne's vacant house Casa Ricci at Leghorn (the Gisbornes

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[67] Mary Shelley's story, "The Sisters of Albano" deals with one of the nun-nurses of the Sisters of Charity, but there seems to be no point of similarity between her tale and the life of Elizabeth Parker.--Tales and Stories, edited by Richard Garnett (London, 1891), pp. 1-19.

were at this time in England), where Shelley could consult with his Livornese lawyer, Del Rosso. Nothing ever came of the legal case; Paolo's menace was for the time being warded off; and Claire recorded rather cynically in her journal, apropos of Anacreon's ode to the cicala: "The Italians say to those who threaten to take to the law, 'Cantate cantate, e poi farete come la Cicala, scoppiarete.' which alludes to the Cicala singing louder and louder if his stomach is rubbed untill it finally bursts."[68]

While they were in Leghorn the Shelleys saw very few people, although visits to and from Pisa were frequent. Almost the only Livornese mentioned are the Ricci girls, Appolonia and Carlotta, with whom Claire went out walking and shopping. Mary teased Henry Reveley unmercifully in her letters to the Gisbornes in England, in which she described the landlord's two daughters as pining away in his absence. Of their father, one can only guess from Mary's jocular address: "Dalla bellisima e superbissima villa del Grand' Capitano Gaetano Ricci--Uffiziale dell' magnifico Ferdinando di Toscana."[69]

By 5 August the trouble stirred up by Paolo, whatever it was, seemed to have quieted down; no law suit proved necessary,

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[68] Ashley MSS., 13 July 1820. For a full acoount of the Hoppner scandal see White, _op. cit._, II, 73-76, 306-315.

[69] _Letters_ _of_ _Mary_ _W._ _Shelley_, I, 112. However little is known of the Ricci girls, it is clear that they were not the daughters of the servants Giuseppe and Annunziata as has been supposed.

the Shelleys moved to Casa Prinni at the Bagni di San Giuliano (also called the Bagni di Pisa) four miles out of the town of Pisa, where for a few weeks Claire stayed with them, before she returned alone to Leghorn for the month of September--a whole month of seabathing for her glandular condition and of writing to assuage her mental suffering.

She was writing something referred to in her journals as "Don Juan." Her "Hints for Don Juan," almost all crossed out at a later date, are not concerned so much with Byron's poem as with the author.[70] To Claire, who referred sarcastically to Byron as "the Hero," there was little to choose between them. Indeed, Byron had demonstrated a remarkable ability to take on characteristics from his literary productions, so that he eventually assumed a pose indistinguishable from the poem. He might have said with Curran, when asked if he had sat for a certain portrait, "no, it was the portrait that sat for me."[71] Mozart's Don Giovanni had been very popular in England in 1816, and its airs were standard fare at concerts and in the drawing room thereafter. The parallel between its hero and Byron was inescapable, and even those who avoided saying the obvious

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[70] Ashley MSS. For a further discussion of this projected work, see Chapter III.

[71] Sir Jonah Barrington, Historic Memoirs of Ireland (London, 1835), II, 161n.

referred to Fletcher as "that doughty Leporello."[72] By the spring of 1820, Claire Clairmont, whether she would or no, had assumed the role of Donna Elvira.

Three of Claire's letters to Byron during this spring have been preserved.[73] On 16 March she complained that it had been nearly a year and a half since she had seen Allegra and begged to have the child sent to her at Pisa. When no answer was forthcoming she wrote on 23 April that she was setting out on 3 May to fetch the child herself. Her letter revealed a forced calm and a firm resolve. But although Byron had no real objection to Claire's seeing Allegra at reasonable intervals as had been agreed, he did not want her with Claire or the Shelleys for any extended period. On 22 April he had explained this in the famous "green fruit and God" letter to Hoppner,[74] and Mrs. Hoppner sent it on to Claire in time to stop her from proceeding to Ravenna. On 1 May Claire replied indignantly to the accusations:

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[72] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 276. "Don Juan had not a better Leporello, for imitating his master," Shelley said. --Thomas Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron (London, 1824), p. 4.

[73] They are in the Murray MSS., and excerpts, with the exception of the passage referred to in note 81 below, are in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., pp. 244-248.

[74] Prothero, V, 14-15.

> Your fears concerning the Child's religious principles are quite unnecessary as I should never allow her to be taught to disbelieve in what I myself believe, therefore you may be assured that, in whatever way you desire, she shall be taught to worship God. Though my creed is different from Shelley's I must always feel grateful for his kindness (to which I am perhaps indebted for my life) & every day convinces me more of his moral virtue. . . . This letter is an appeal to your justice, since every feeling of kindness toward me seems to have died in your mind.[75]

This is Claire's first declaration of a difference of opinion from Shelley, and as such is something of a landmark. Byron, of course, had every reason to believe that Claire was a dogmatic atheist. The projected novel about which she had consulted him in 1816 was to appear conventional to the average intelligence, but to reveal its true beauties only to the atheist. She had written in an early letter, "Oftentimes I wish there was a God that I might teize him with eternal sollicitations for your happiness."[76] Shelley himself felt called upon to justify himself in the light of Byron's letter (Claire had already answered it before it had come to Shelley's attention), and although he did not attempt to induce Byron to depart from his plan of keeping Allegra, he did clarify his

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[75] Murray MSS., quoted by George Paston, "New Light on Byron's Loves. VI. Claire Clairmont: The Struggle for Allegra," Cornhill Magazine, CL (September, 1934) 269.

[76] Prothero, III, 434-436, 437.

point of view toward the ideal upbringing of a young lady.[77]

On 25 August Byron wrote to inform Shelley that he could no longer correspond with Claire because of her irrational and provoking letters.[78] On 10 September he complained to the Hoppners of her insolent letters;[79] on 17 September Shelley wrote, admitting that her letters, which he did not see, were undoubtedly childish and provoking, but begging that she be excused because of her unhappiness about Allegra and her ill health.[80]

There is plentiful evidence that from the beginning of 1820 Mary and Claire were having their old difficulties of living peacefully under the same roof. It must have been one of the first things observed by Mrs. Mason, who consistently thereafter exerted herself to find an independent position for Claire. But Claire, as always, was loath to be separated. Her idea was a perpetual *ménage à trois*: she could see that there were times when she was of real help to Shelley, and he

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[77] Julian *Works*, X, 172-174.

[78] *Shelley and Mary*, III, 532 A. (A copy of Byron's letter was tipped into Dowden's copy by Lady Shelley. British Museum manuscript department, Ashley 4028.)

[79] Prothero, V, 74.

[80] Julian *Works*, X, 207-209.

humored her, probably much more than was good for her.[81] "Medwin's cheerful conversation is of some use to me, but what would it be to your sweet consolation, my own Clare?" wrote Shelley, in a tone that was not likely to resign her to her temporary isolation from him.[82]

A suggestion of Claire's idea of her position is found in her journal, buried in some notes on Plutarch:

> Pythagoras says when you sacrifice to the celestial Gods let it be with an odd number & when to the terrestial--with an even 'for the odd number is most perfect because it cannot be divided into two equal parts as the even number may which is therefore the symbol of division' Let this rule be applied to marriage and we shall find the cause of its unhappy querulous state.[83]

The implications of "terrestial" and "celestial" should be considered before one places the worst construction on this passage, but even then it is saddening to realize that Claire apparently believed that such a "marriage," even on the most

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[81] See White, op. cit., II, 238-239, for a discussion of Shelley's letters as an indication of his affection. The clearest evidence that Shelley told Claire what she wanted to hear and in general spoiled her is in his letter to Byron, 26 May 1820: "What letters she writes to you I know not; perhaps they are very provoking; but at all events it is better to forgive the weak. I do not say--I do not think--that your resolutions are unwise; only express them mildly--and pray don't quote me."--Julian Works, X, 173.

[82] Julian Works, X, 214.

[83] Ashley MSS., 11 January 1820. For a discussion of Claire's custom of copying from her reading passages of particular applicability to her life, see Chapter II.

"celestial" level, was possible for her with Mary and Shelley. The division which she persisted in thinking impossible was doomed to take place, if not into two equal parts, into what was worse, three. The symptoms were obvious in both her journal and Mary's, yet she never fully realized that she and Mary simply could not live together. She wrote self-righteously on 9 February, "A Greek author says, 'A bad wife is like winter in a house.'"[84] On 8 June, Mary noted, "A better day than most days and good reason for it, though Shelley is not well. Clare away at Pugnano."[85] On 4 July it was Claire's turn:

> Heigh-ho the Clare and the Ma
> Find something to fight about every day--[86]

On 20 July Claire recorded in her diary:

> At 5 in the morning Tetta [Laurette Mason], Mad. M[ason] & Miss Field & myself set out for Livorno, where we arrive at ½ past seven. They spend the day with us. Tetta I & Miss F--ride all over Livorno and along the sea shore as far as the Lazzarettos. They depart taking S[helley] with them about six in the Evening for Pisa.[87]

It would be difficult to guess what Mary was doing that day from Claire's account, but turning to her diary one discovers that she was one of the party. Mary too ignored Claire almost

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[84] Ashley MSS.

[85] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 134.

[86] Ashley MSS.

[87] Ibid.

entirely in her journal, even when Claire's activity was the most important event of the day. The irritation which did find its way into the respective journals appeared to be no secret at all. And for a full picture, one must remember Mary's letter to Mrs. Hoppner: "She has some faults--you know them as well as I--but her heart is good, and if ever we quarreled, which was seldom, it was I, and not she, that was harsh, and our instantaneous reconciliations were sincere and affectionate."[88] The spats were apparently quick, open and brief, but unfortunately persistent. The affectionate relationship was never deeply shaken, but it was better when they were separated.

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Almost as soon as Claire returned to Pisa from her solitary month of sea bathing at Leghorn she went on to Florence for a trial month in the home of Professor Antonio Bojti (or Boïti), a physician and surgeon friend of Mrs. Mason and the Tantinis. Mrs. Mason had made the arrangements, having seen how necessary it was for Claire to live apart from the Shelleys. To be ready at a moment's call from his friend and patron, the Grand Duke Ferdinand III, Dr. Bojti lived in one of the tall houses opposite the Palazzo Pitti, in the same block as the house which later gained fame as Casa Guidi.

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[88] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 149.

Antonio Bojti has been described as an excellent citizen, an affectionate husband, and a tender father, active and enthusiastic in the education of his children--a man who was loved and respected by his friends and colleagues.[1] He was a Roman, born in 1778, and entered on the basis of an examination at the age of eleven to the study of surgery in the Arcispedale di S. Spirito in Rome. Having gained three silver medals and one gold, he entered the Flaiani clinic and was rector of the school of anatomy. His rise among Roman surgeons was rapid, and in 1805 he had been called to the court of the Grand Duke Ferdinand, then Duke of Salzburg. He became at that time particularly interested in obstetrics, and following the Grand Duke was welcomed to the medical faculties of Salzburg, Wurzburg, and finally Florence, where he was practically the founder and certainly the main support of the Medico-Surgical academy of that city.[2]

When Claire first came to stay at his house, Dr. Bojti was a comparatively young man, forty-two, with several little girls,

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[1] The following is based on an account by St. Grottanelli de'Santi, in de Tipaldo, op. cit., III, 93.

[2] Bojti's published work, Osservazioni ad un nuovo metodo di amministrare il decotto di corteccia di melograno contro il verme tenia, was published in 1826, and a year later, at the age of forty-nine, he was dead. Mrs. Mason wrote to Mary Shelley, 9 March 1827, "Doctor Boiti (Claire's friend) died suddenly just after he assisted the Grand Duchesses accouchement, being scarcely out of the room when he dropped down dead."--Abinger MSS.

the oldest of whom, Louisa and Annina, spent a good deal of time with Claire. She was not a governess, nor even really on pension, as Medwin has said, but actually a paying guest, treated as one of the family. She took dancing lessons, studied her German so that some day she might go to Charles in Austria, went to the theatre, paid and received calls with Madame Bojti and the girls, wrote letters, and spent many hours writing in her journal. She sketched lengthy caricatures of Byron and Shelley,[3] and either to confuse or amuse the children, or perhaps to satisfy some childish whim of her own, she spelled for a while each word in her diary backwards.

The Bojtis liked Claire and the arrangement was as sound a one as Mrs. Mason's great good sense could make it, but nevertheless nothing really exciting was happening in Florence; Claire's friends were all elsewhere; she felt miserable, neglected, and worse yet, bored. In desperation Shelley advised her to leave as tactfully as she could at the end of her trial month, so as not to offend Mrs. Mason who had gone out of her way to make the arrangements, and to come back to Mary and him. Finally on 21 November she did go back to Pisa for a month.

Life was anything but dull in Pisa. The Shelleys had been living a very quiet life, but on Claire's arrival, by coincidence, the Shelley circle was suddenly tremendously expanded. Tom Medwin arrived in Pisa at about this time and for four

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[3] Ashley MSS., 8 November 1820, partially printed in Grylls, op. cit., pp. 125-127.

months became a regular part of the Shelley household. His description of Claire deals with this period, and though overstating her age (she was then only twenty-two) he provided the only extensive first-hand account of Claire as a young woman:

> I remember her in 1820, living _en pension_ at Florence, then twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age. She might have been mistaken for an Italian, for she was a _brunette_ with very dark hair and eyes. Her history was then a profound secret. . . . As she possessed considerable accomplishments--spoke French and Italian, particularly the latter, with all its _nuances_ and niceties--she was much courted by the Russian coterie, a numerous and fashionable one in that city. Though not strictly handsome at that time, for she had had much to struggle with, the mind makes its ravages in the fairest, most she was engaging and plessing, and expresses an _esprit de société_ rare among our countrywomen. From her personal appearance at that time, I should conceive, that when Byron formed an intimacy with her at Geneva in 1816, she must have been strikingly handsome.[4]

It is easy, in examining Claire's relationship with Mary and the evidence of her own letters, to form a picture of Claire as querulous and dissatisfied and on the whole rather disagreeable. Certainly such a picture is only a small part of the truth. To understand Shelley's delight in her society, even when he had to admit that she was at times childish and weak,

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[4] _Revised Life of Shelley_, pp. 169-170. Medwin's notorious inaccuracy crops up in the reference to Claire's intimacy with Byron, which of course took place before the meeting in Geneva. The rest of his account of Claire's relationship with Byron is equally misinformed. It is clear that although he spoke with the authority of one who knew, he had to depend on sources outside the Shelley circle for his information.

one must keep always in mind the other Claire,[5] who must certainly have been in the ascendant most of the time--socially gifted beyond most Englishwomen, with the rare cosmopolitan spirit which made her the chosen companion of intellectually distinguished men and women of many nationalities. For the Pisan circle which now formed about the Shelleys was composed of Claire's friends as much as of Mary's and Shelley's. The depression which haunted her private life and her relations with her closest friends was almost never allowed to show. Only once during her stay at the Bojti's did her unhappiness affect her vivacity so that it was visible to the Tantinis, and it was this fact which really impressed Shelley, more than her letters, that she was wretched.[6]

How much she was liked by her friends among the Italian doctors and their families is indicated by a letter from Mrs. Mason to Mary, four years after Claire had left Italy. In it she reported that a gentleman had brought a letter for her from

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[5] In the spring of 1816 Claire reported to Byron that Shelley had described her thus: "My sweet Child, there are two Clare's --one of them I should call irritable if it were not for the nervous disorder, the effects of which you still retain: the nervous Clare is reserved and melancholy and more sarcastic than violent; the good Clare is gentle yet cheerful; and to me the most engaging of human creatures."--Prothero, III, 437. I cannot see that Shelley would ever have had reason to alter any part of this statement. See below, Chapter II.

[6] Julian Works, X, 213. "You must indeed be very uncomfortable for it to become visible to them."

Claire, and inquired at a gathering at which the Pantinis and Bojtis were present where he could find Mrs. Mason, because he carried a letter for her from Miss Clairmont, "on which all her acquaintance attacked him for news of her & every one spoke so kindly & shewed so much pleasure in hearing of her that it must have augmented the good opinion he had already formed of her--Pantini told me this circumstance."[7]

It is certain that Claire had ample opportunity to display her social graces during her month with the Shelleys in Pisa. Her diary marks the entry into the Shelley circle of the following personages, all within her first fortnight:

Nov. 24th.	"Pacchiani spends the Evening."
Nov. 28th.	"Mr. Taafe calls."
Nov. 29th.	"Then with Pacchiani to the Convent of Santa Anna. The beautiful Teresa Viviani."
Dec. 1st.	"Call with Pacchiani upon the Greek Archbishop and the Princess Argiropoli [cousin of Mavrocordato]. Meet Foggi. Pacchiani, Sgricci and Esopo sup."
Dec. 2nd.	"The Prince Mauro Cordato calls."[8]

The person who made the real difference in the Shelley circle was Francesco Pacchiani. He it was who provided the further introductions. Who it was that introduced "il diavalo" Pacchiani himself can only be guessed. Perhaps it was Vaccà or

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[7] Abinger MSS., 6 January 1826.

[8] Ashley MSS.

Tantini, or perhaps one of the Gisbornes, all of whom certainly knew him.[9] But it seemed that everyone knew him. He was magnificently tactful on first acquaintance. Mary was completely taken in at first and was charmed and delighted at his

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[9] Julian *Works*, X, 221. The common denominator of the so-called "Pisan circle" was the professor, poet, and dramatist Giovanni Rosini. A professor at the University of Pisa, he was the friend or acquaintance of Vaccà, Tantini, Canova, Pacchiani, Sgricci, Foggi, Bagnoli, Antinori, and later Giusti and Leopardi. One cannot pursue the bibliography of any of these men far without encountering letters, poems, dedications, funeral elegies, or obscene epigrams by Giovanni Rosini. There is no evidence that Claire knew him, and no mention of him in Mary's journal. But he was known to the Shelleys. Medwin reported, "Among his other guests, Rosini (the author of that episode to the *Promessi Sposi*, the *Monacca di Monza*,) made occasionally one; but no intimacy subsisted between them."--*Revised Life of Shelley*, p. 265. That it was indeed no intimacy can be seen from Mary's description of him in a letter to Leigh Hunt. She had described some "wiseacre Professors of Pisa" who had attempted to put down her recent idol Sgricci at the theater: "The ringleader of this gang is called Rosini a man, a speaker of folly in a city of fools--bad envious talkative presumptuous;--one--'chi mai parla bene di chichesisia--o di quei che vivono o die morti.' He has written a long poem which no one has ever read and like the illustrious Sotherby gives the law to a few distinguished Blues of Pisa."--*Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 124. Among the three editions of his works which I have examined I have found no long poem; most of his verses are occasional pieces of the most ephemeral kind. His prose works are composed largely of biographical studies of his contemporaries and a lecture and series of letters on the subject already more than adequately covered by Dante, *Di Eloquenza Italiana*, or "Necessità di Scrivere nella Propria Lingua." For a critical estimate of his works, see Guido Mazzoni, *Storia Letteraria d'Italia: L'Ottocento* (Milano, 1938), II, 831-883. Shelley's only mention of him is in the beginning of a letter to Taafe in Florence: "I do not wait the slow progress of Rosini before I thank you for your kind letter."--Julian *Works*, X, 281.

conversation.[10] Part of it was recorded by Claire:

> The picture of posterity is like a barrel of wine--you shake the dregs the lightest rise to the top, the heaviest fall to the bottom--so the favourite authors of the day because light and of little value float on the surface of the multitude whilst the profound are borne by their weight through the depths of ages.[11]

But the appeal of this lean and swarthy character, who spoke, Mary thought, with the tongue of Macchiavelli and Boccaccio and who delighted to shake up the dregs of Pisan society was very short-lived indeed. By 11 December he had shown the reverse of the medal: "an inquisitive and indelicate character."[12] He shocked Shelley with his obscene stories, and began to show how exasperating he could be even to his friends. Stories which at first were apparently highly amusing began to be irritating:

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[10] She described him in Italian in a letter to Leigh Hunt, 3 December 1820, in the highest terms: "Lui e davero il solo Italiano che ha cuore ed anima. Ha un spirito altissimo, un ingegno profondo, e un'eloquenza che transporta. I poveri Pisani lo credono matto; e racontano tante storiette di lui che ci fa credere che davero è un poco stravagante, o per parlare in Inglese--eccentric. Ma lui dice--Mi credano matto e mi fa piacere che si sbaglierebbero cosi; ma forse il tempo verra quando vedrano che sia la pazzia di Bruto. Ogni sera viene ala nostra casa e sempre fa le nostre delizie colle di sue idee originale. Parla una bellissima lingua Italiana, tutto differente della idioma di oggi, che ci fa credere d' udire il Boccaccio o il Macchiavelli parlando come scrissono."--Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 115n.

[11] Ashley MSS., 28 November 1820.

[12] Ashley MSS.

> Madame Tantini calls--she relates of Pacchiani that once he sent for Tantini in the middle of the night: who thinking him to be ill, got up in all haste, cursing the sickness which called him from his warm bed and hastened grumbling to the Professor who received him very warmly saying that finding he could not sleep he had sent for him to hold a little pleasant conversation.[13]

Madame Tantini contributed another of the Pacchiani stories:

> Pacchiani also came to them one night and begged a bed, as from some cause or other he could not find one--They agreed and he going away they prepared a chamber against his return. He never returned nor did they see him again for four years.[14]

The man's whole life followed the pattern of his association with the Shelleys: great promise, never fulfilled.[15] Born in 1771 in Prato, he was ordained Canonico, or rather, rector of a chapter of the cathedral, and throughout his life continued as confessor of certain noble families, among them that of the Governor of Pisa, Niccolò Viviani. By 1801 he held the chairs of logic and metaphysics at the University of Pisa, and encouraged by Humboldt, Gay-Lussac, and Cuvier, seemed

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[13] Ashley MSS., 9 December 1820.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] The general outline of Pacchiani's life is too familiar to need full treatment here. It may be found in Medwin's *Revised Life of Shelley*, pp. 273-277 and in Enrica Viviani della Robbia, *Vita di Una Donna* (*L'Emily di Shelley*) (Firenze, 1936), pp. 45-51.

about to distinguish himself as a physicist and chemist.[16] But when Shelley knew him this promise had petered out; he had by a flamboyant *bon mot* sacrificed his chair at the University, so that he was living by his sharp tongue--an amusing conversationalist but a formidable enemy--"a *Mezzano*, *Cicerone*, *Conosciatore*, *Dilettante*, and I might add, *Ruffiano* [pimp]."[17]

Pacchiani was a favorite of the Grand Duke Ferdinand, who had defended him from the charge of having given only three lectures in an entire academic year while holding three chairs at the University by saying that three lectures by such a man were worth a thousand by another.[18] In 1803 he gained admission

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[16] Cuvier's disappointment was expressed in a paper before the National Institute of France in 1806: "Nous avions annoncé l'année dernière l'opinion de M. Pacchiani sur la composition de l'acide muriatique, qu'il croyait produire en enlevant à l'eau une partie de son oxigène, au moyen de la pile galvanique. Cette decouverte aurait été l'une des plus importantes, que la Chimie ait encore à desirer; mais elle ne s'est pas vêrifiée." Michele Ferrucci, in de Tipaldi, *op. cit.*, VI, 70.

[17] Medwin, *Revised Life of Shelley*, p. 276. The much-quoted *bon mot* was "Son' un uomo publico, in una strada publica, con una donna publica."--*op. cit.*, pp. 274-275. The chief butt of Pacchiani's vicious tongue was the same Professor Rosini who so irritated Mary, styled by *il diavolo* as *Ventonio*. One of the less pungent of his rhymes may be found in *Alcune Poesie di Francesco Pacchiani e Tommaso Sgricci* (Arezzo, 1885), p. 4n.

[18] Ferrucci, *op. cit.*, p. 68. See *In Morte di Ferdinando Terzo, Granduca di Toscana: Canto* del Prof. Francesco Pacchiani (Pistoja, n.d), pp. 17-25.

to the Accademia della Crusca with his Ragionamento filosofico intorno alla lingua, but apparently his brief and flashy career as a philologist went no farther.[19] He published articles and verses sporadically, and his career as a whole was just distinguished enough to allow his descendants to bask in a small beam of reflected glory,[20] but on the whole he was defeated throughout his life by wantonness and inertia. Even his best friends deplored the loss of the products of such a promising

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[19] Ferrucci, op. cit., p. 71, and Mazzoni, op. cit., I, 331.

[20] The biographical note prepared for a pamphlet of Pacchiani's letters printed in honor of the marriage of one of his nieces makes him sound very distinguished indeed and a model for his age.--Francesco Pacchiani, Alcune Lettere Inedite (Prato, 1875).

intelligence.[21]

Most English people who met him disliked him at once. Lady Murray met him at about this time and commented:

> Professor Pacchiani, of Pisa, was a most learned man, but his volubility was fatiguing, and he kept himself in such perpetual motion, going backwards and forwards between Pisa and Florence, that he could not derive much profit from his acquirements.[22]

A man with almost as many titles and nicknames as _il diavolo_ himself, the Reverend Robert Finch, included Pacchiani and the Countess his wife on his interminable list of Italian acquaintance,[23] and commented on him in his journal:

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[21] A frequently reprinted (and once at least, parodied) sonnet on a portrait of Pacchiani was written by Abate Arcangeli:

Questi è Pacchiani.--La fronte il revela
 Che gli anni non piegâr nè la sventura,
 La fronte in che la grande alma si cela
 Che sdegna il mondo e in se vive secura.

Questo è lo sguardo che pur sempre anela
 Spiar gli occulti veri e piu non cura,
 E a quello sguardo tutta si disvela
 In sua sublime nudità natura.

Questo è il labro che d' arbitra eloquenza
 Diffondeva l' incanto sovrumano,
 E dolcezza di carmi e sapienza.

Questa è la mano. . . . ahimè! pianga la gente;
 Che non volle scrivendo quella mano
 Lasciar l' imago della diva mente.

Ferrucci, _op. cit._, pp. 69-70.

[22] _Op. cit._, IV, 268-269.

[23] This list, extending over many pages, is among the Finch papers in the Bodleian, MS Finch e. 24*.

> The Professors reputed by the students to give the best lectures are Savi, professor of Botany, and the man Pacchiani, professor of theoretical physics. It is extraordinary that the latter who never opens a book, and lives in unremitted habits of idleness and distraction should be able to conduct the most profound demonstrations in sublime mathematics.[24]

A month later Finch was fleeing from the garrulous Pacchiani exactly as Claire and the Shelleys were to flee from Finch himself whenever they met him: "Going into the trattoria we met Professor Pacchiani, whom I would not speak to. I am sorry to treat him thus, but I am oblig'd to rid myself thus of a man, who would otherwise take up my whole time."[25] It stretches the imagination to think of a man voluble enough thus to affect the talkative and ubiquitous Reverend Colonel Calicot Finch.

By the end of January Mary was thoroughly disillusioned about their "Black Genius," and wrote a long letter about him to Claire, by then back at the Bojti's whither she had been conducted by Pacchiani. She revealed the *crime* that Pacchiani used his young companion, Æsopo Campetti, as a slave and appropriated to himself Æsopo's earnings from his scholars, while bragging about how good he was to the lad and how much he had to do for him.[26] Mary went about Pisa always in horror of

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[24] MS Finch e. 21, 12 December 1817.

[25] *Ibid.*, 16 January 1818.

[26] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 120-121. The last the Shelleys heard of Pacchiani seems to have been the visit he paid to Claire at the Bojti's on 6 February 1821.--Ashley MSS.

the scolari of the University, which she considered one of the worst parts of the indescribable rabble of the town. She was becoming aware that the faculty of that learned institution was in some cases little better.

Medwin was with the Shelleys for the entire duration of their association with Pacchiani, and he concluded his colorful and impressive sketch of that character with the comment that he would have been spared the effort of describing him if he had had Mary's Valperga at hand, for in it she had drawn him "to the life." Indeed, after a glance at Martini's portrait of Pacchiani (following p. 107) it is not difficult to visualize Mary's abortive villain, Benedetto Pepi, "half a buffoon, half a madman," the self-styled hypocrite and avaricious tyrant:

> He was a man by whose dry and wrinkled face you might guess him to be nearly sixty years of age; and yet, by the agility and more youthful appearance of his person, he could not be more than forty. His eyes were small, black and sparkling; his nose pointed and turned up; his lips were as a line in his face, uncurved and unmarked except by three deep wrinkles at each corner; his eyebrows were elevated as in vanity; and yet a flat high forehead denoted a good understanding. His figure was tall and lank, yet muscular.[27]

A somewhat more favorable impression was left on Claire and Mary by the improvvisatore Tommaso Sgricci, who was introduced by Pacchiani into the Shelley circle on the first of December. There is no evidence that Pacchiani and Sgricci were particularly intimate friends. Pacchiani was merely fulfilling his

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[27] Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca (London, 1823), I, 106-107.

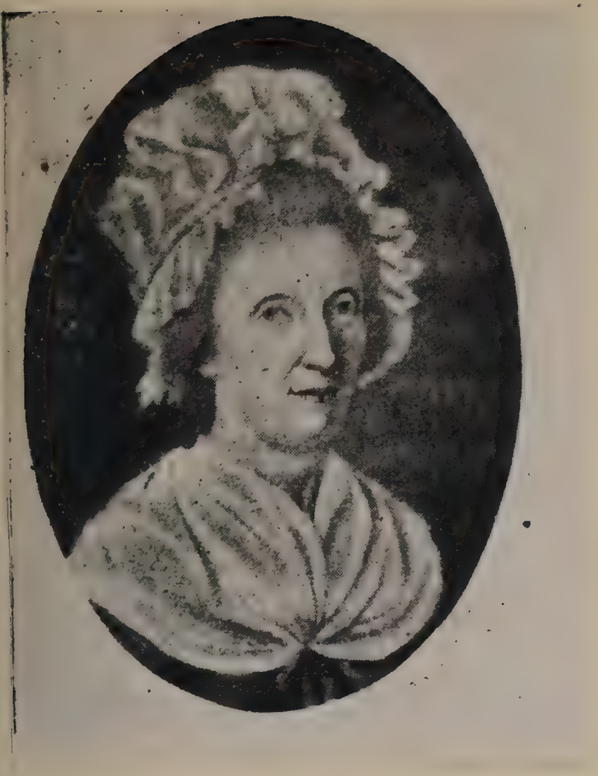
Marianna Dionigi

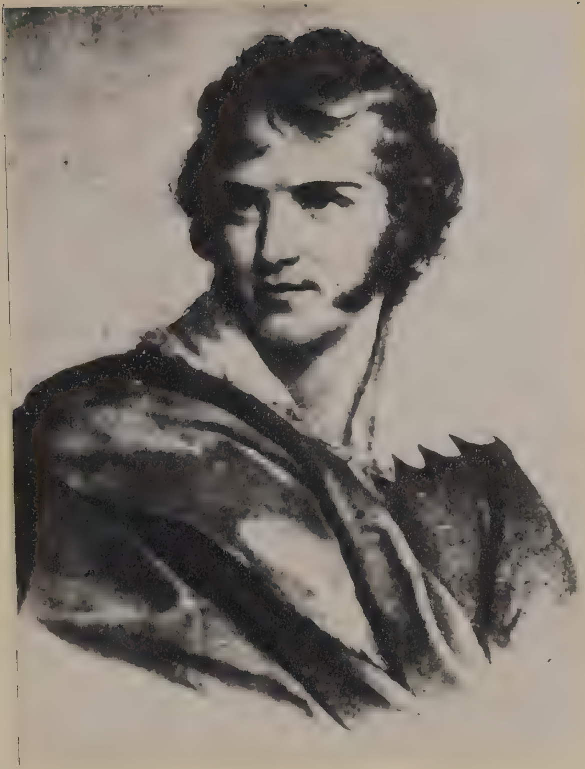
Tommaso Sgricci

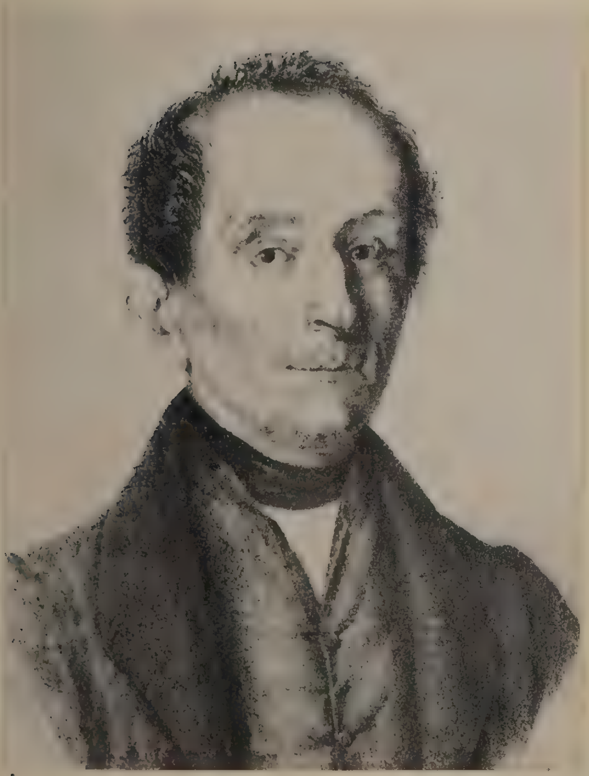
Francesco Pacchiani

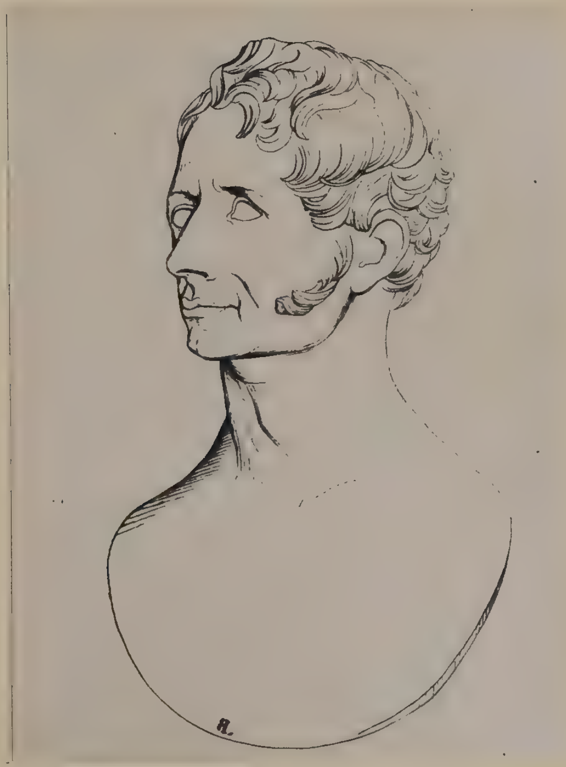
Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri

Shelley's Italian Acquaintance









function of Mezzano, introducing people of mutual interest. And the delight was a much more lasting one, for Mary never failed to be thrilled by the performance of Italy's most accomplished exponent of the art of improvisation. Apparently Sgricci gave a private performance the first evening that he was introduced at the Casa Galetti. "Pacchiani, Sgricci and Esopo sup," Claire wrote. "Sgricci improvised upon the future independence of Italy--[News of damm'd Brute][28] Sgricci imitates him & his friend Eliseo."[29] The next time Claire heard him was at the theater in Pisa:

> He improvisa's a Canzone upon Pyramus & Thisbe then a tragedy, Iphegenia in Tauris. Wonderfully fine; it seemed not the work of a human mind, but as if he were the instrument interpreting (played upon by) the superhuman inspirations of a God; the impression was so strong & fresh, a feature which belongs peculiarly to the art of the Improvisare. Of Iphegenia in grief he said--her clear fair forehead appears like a star in the morning mist.[30]

These two notes indicate what the appeal of Sgricci to Shelley must have been. His political liberalism was exactly what Shelley would have expected of a true poet, and the almost uncanny ability at spontaneous creation, which made him appear the medium of true in-spiration, fitted in with Shelley's semi-Platonic, semi-Coleridgean image of the poet as an âeolian harp: "Man is an instrument over which a series of external

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[28] Passage in square brackets deleted by Claire.

[29] Ashley MSS., 1 December 1820.

[30] Ashley MSS., 21 December 1820.

and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an everchanging wind over an Æolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody."[31]

Mary's enthusiastic reports are contained in her letters, particularly to Claire after her return to Florence.[32] How little her opinion changed can be seen from her account of the same performances in her 1826 article for the Westminister Review.[33] She was not blind to his faults--his love of applause and the admiration of the ladies--but she was willing to dismiss them as mere weaknesses. Shelley, on the other hand, was not so thoroughly swept off his feet and saw that the man's weaknesses were not to be passed over lightly. For all his eloquent defense of freedom and his rumored Carbonarism, Sgricci was apparently something of a snob. He referred to a large group of his fellow writers as "canaglia letterata,"[34] an attitude, however well deserved, apt to appeal more to a person of Claire's mentality than to Shelley, who wrote,

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[31] "A Defense of Poetry," Julian Works, VII, 109. See H. Buxton Forman, "The Improvvisatore Sgricci in Relation to Shelley," Gentlemans' Magazine, CCXLVI (January, 1880) 115-123.

[32] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 117, 122-124, 126-128, 132-133.

[33] "The English in Italy," op. cit., pp. 335-337.

[34] Guglielmo Volpi, Tommaso Sgricci: Improvvisatore di Tragedie (Firenze, 1897), p. 8.

"I hate the cowardly way which prompts such base stories as Sgricci's about the Neapolitans: a set of slaves who dare not imitate the high example of clasping even the shadow of Freedom," wrote Shelley.[35]

Sgricci was not yet at the height of his career when Shelley met him in 1819, but he was much improved in skill since the evening that Polidori was bored nearly to extinction by two of his 1816 performances in Milan.[36] Polidori was definitely of the group which for years after the death of Sgricci was to carry on the debate about whether Sgricci was really "inspired," or whether he actually cheated. According to Polidori's account, the improvvisatore found one excuse after another for not treating the subjects suggested by the audience and drawn from a glass vase at the beginning of the performance, and when he finally settled on one to his taste (the implication being that it was one on which he was already prepared) the only bearable parts were those which he seemed to have memorized beforehand. By the time the Shelleys heard him, he could produce on the spot a full two-and-a-half hour tragedy on the Greek plan from a story outline on a subject with which he was not familiar suggested to him from the audience. He was

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[35] Julian Works, X, 240.

[36] Polidori, op. cit., pp. 183-186.

described as having a prodigious memory, so that he could draw names, dates, and facts from his head as if from a library.[37] This remarkable memory, coupled with a minute knowledge of the Greek and Italian classics, and a natural showmanship which carried over into the drawing rooms of his patrons and patronesses, had produced by 1821 a notable success, and the tragédie sgricciane was by then an impressive performance.

Although he was a man with serious limitations and a poet doomed to burn himself out without leaving anything but a vivid legend to posterity, Tommaso Sgricci was for a while a colorful and exciting member of the Shelley circle, and the impression he made on the minds of Mary, Claire, and Shelley was a lasting one. Fortunately, perhaps, he did not stay around long enough to make himself a nuisance.

Another new member of the Pisan circle, and its self-styled poet laureate, was the "Count" John Taafe , an Irish adventurer, Knight Commander of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (whatever that might mean), who made himself quite at home at the Shelleys'. He was a bore; there was no doubt about it. Shelley nick-named him Τάφος (the grave),[38] and Jane Williams branded him False Taafe after the Masi fray, in which he was one of the

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[37] Volpi, op. cit., p. 19.

[38] Medwin, Revised Life of Shelley, p. 249.

worst offenders.[39] But he was foolish enough to be amusing, and Byron and Shelley both had many laughs at his expense. He fancied himself a translator of Dante ("I Mantuan, capering, squalid, squalling," was Shelley's extract from the translation),[40] but his commentaries on the *Divina Commedia* were sound and valuable. The Reverend Colonel Finch was in Pisa at about the time the Shelleys first came to know Taafe, and he received from a friend in Rome a comment on the quasi-poet which just about summed up Shelley's own attitude:

> *Largo Sostenuto*
> As to my Brother Officer, Colonel Ta-a-a-a-a-ffe--
> I am inclined to think he had better by Ha-a-a-a-lf
> "mozzle" his Muse and let my poor dear Dante alone. He is, probably, unapporized that his countryman, Boyd, has already *munster-ized*, & *monster-ized* the great Florentine. But, as Homer, and Virgil have been travestied, and maccaronated, we must add this attempt to our former shudderings.[41]

Finch was also acquainted with another of the characters introduced to the Shelleys at about this time--Ferdinando Foggi, professor of law at the University of Pisa. He was known to the Gisbornes and to Mrs. Mason as a useful sort of person who would carry parcels between friends on his trips

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[39] *Maria Gisborn and Edward Williams*, p. 139. For an account of this mishap, from the Italian point of view, based on the unpublished MSS. in the Archivo di Firenze, see Felice Tribolati, "Lord Byron a Pisa," *Nuova Antologia*, XXVI (July, 1874) 631-665.

[40] Julian *Works*, X, 260.

[41] Captain Hely, in Rome, 21 January 1820, Bodleian MS Finch d. 9.

between Florence and Pisa and who would be willing on occasion to give language lessons. References to him in Mary's letters indicate that she knew him in these capacities for some time before he became a sporadic caller in Casa Galetti at the end of 1820. He emerges a little from this dim light in the journals of the Reverend Colonel Finch, who met him through the Gisbornes in 1817, "a smug little old man in a wig." In January Finch recorded, "Der herr Ferdinand Foggi ist ein dichter, und die wissenschaft der mathematiken gefallen habe [*sic*]."[42] Perhaps the little man was merely one of the poetasters who, like Taafe , hovered on the outskirts of the Shelley family in 1821.

Among the most exciting of Pacchiani's introductions to Claire and the Shelleys was the little family of Greek patriots --the Prince and Princess Argyropoulo, and the cousin of the Princess, Alexander Mavrocordato. During Shelley's lifetime Prince Mavrocordato was a hero, a living embodiment of the freedom-loving spirit of the ancient Greeks. Mary's notes to *Hellas* tell the story best. The poem, dedicated to Mavrocordato, was born out of the 1821 revolution, which seemed about to change the destiny of the world, perhaps for centuries. In

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[42] Bodleian MS Finch. d. 21., 18 December and 23 December 1817 and 12 January 1818. There is just a possibility, suggested by a slight ambiguity in the journal, that the Ferdinand Foggi, *dichter*, may have been the son of the old professor. It is impossible to tell from Claire's or Mary's references whether father or son was meant.

Pisa, several well-informed Italians, with Vaccà at their head, looked to Shelley for encouragement and sympathy in their hopes, which seemed about to be justified by the news of the declaration of independence by Mavrocordato's cousin, Prince Ipsilanti.[43] In the back of Mary's 1819-1822 diary, she copied the following notice from Le Constitutionel, 12 November 1821, four months after he had left to take part in the revolution:

> Alexandre rèunit a la perseverance et la fermetè de caractere l'exterieur le plus doux et le plus affable. Il a tout sacrifiè pour la cause de sa nation; sa fortune toute entiere a ete employèe a faire des preparatifs de guerre, et son seul but semble être la liberté de sa patrie. Aussi jouit il dejá de l'estime genèrale des chêfs et toute l'affections des troupes Suliotes.[44]

It was not until Trelawny had accumulated experience in actual service in the Greek war that Mary was to hear about the other side of her amiable instructor in Greek. Of her "wooden god, Mavrocordato," Trelawny wrote from Missolonghi:

> I hope, ere long, to see his head removed from his worthless and heartless body. He is a mere shuffling soldier, an aristocratic brute--wants Kings and Congresses; a poor weak shuffling, intriguing, cowardly fellow; so no more about him.[45]

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[43] Julian Works, III, 63-64.

[44] Abinger MSS. The French is as Mary copied it. There is also in this collection a letter preserved from Ralon (?) Argyropoulo to Mary, 5 September 1822, thanking her for a copy of Hellas and offering sympathy for the death of Shelley.

[45] Op. cit., p. 82.

Sgricci, who had already given a private impersonation of Byron, had an opportunity at this time to observe the turbaned prince, and the tremendous success in Paris of his improvisations on the siege and the fall of Missolonghi was undoubtedly owing to his acquaintance with several of the leading characters.

The mezzano Pacchiani, with his keen eye for profitable introductions, knew in advance how strong an appeal the "poor captive bird," Teresa Emilia Viviani, would have for the good-hearted and romantic English. They were drawn to her immediately.[46] Claire in particular, just returned from the boredom at the Bojtis', would be sensitive to the plight of the girl, like herself, deprived of the active life, yet temperamentally unsuited (whether or not she would admit it) to the contemplative life. "Yesterday she was watering some flowers in her cell--she has nothing to love but her flowers--," Pacchiani reported with a deep sigh, "'Yes,' said she, addressing them, 'you are born to vegetate, but we thinking beings were made for action--not to be penned up in a corner, or set at a window to blow or die.'"[47] As long as Claire was in Pisa, she called on Teresa or wrote to her nearly every day,

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[46] The full and authoritative life of Teresa Viviani is by Enrica Viviani della Robbia, op. cit.

[47] Medwin, Revised Life of Shelley, p. 278. Cave! Medwin's account of the Viviani is not entirely accurate.

gave her English lessons and told her the story of Shelley's life. Throughout the spring Claire wrote to her as regularly as to Mary and Shelley, and Teresa addressed many affectionate letters in return to her "Chiarina."[48]

But the lovely Teresa was not without suitors. It became clear that she would before long leave the convent for the position she craved--that of wife and mother. On April 5 Claire received a letter from her, enclosing a letter written to her by her present Amico Amante and a chain of hair. On 3 May Claire met the Signor Avvocato Carlo Biondi in Florence, and after seeing him several times she enclosed a letter from him to Emilia in one of her own letters to Mary. His brother Luigi was by then Teresa's principal suitor. On 23 July Claire heard (probably from Mary) "that she prays always to a Saint, and every time she changes her lover, she changes her Saint, adopting the one of her lover."[49] Apparently this very accommodating young lady had finally adopted the saint of Luigi Biondi, for on 8 September they were married. The note about the saints was the last notice the woman who inspired "Epipsychidion" received in Claire's journal.

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[48] Theresa's letters are printed in translation in White, op. cit., II, 467-485. An amusing parody of the sentimentally affectionate epistolatory style of an Italian girl may be found in the letters of Serena Bruchi, in Walter Savage Landor, "High and Low Life in Italy," in The Complete Works, edited by T. Earle Welby (London, 1930), XI, 1-174.

[49] Ashley MSS.

Claire was back in Florence for Christmas, and she remained there until June. She went about making calls and attending parties and greatly enlarging the circle of her acquaintance. She saw a good deal of the Marchesa Orlandini and her friend Madame Martini, Sgricci's mother. She met the fascinating and learned Count Cicognara, President of the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice and author of the important *Storia della Scultura*. She enjoyed the company at dinner one evening of the poet Pietro Bagnoli, who spoke amusingly and at length of Pietro Aretino. Bagnoli, professor of classical studies at the University of Pisa, was just then publishing his epic in twenty cantos on the siege of Thebes, *Il Cadmo*, the major work upon which his reputation rests.[50] She came to know the family Bacciocchi, into which Elisa Buonaparte, the eldest sister of Napoleon, had married. Several times she went to hear the celebrated *improvvisatrice* Madame Mazzei, that lady of illustrious and ancient family whose virtuosity was displayed in her mastery of verse forms--the octaves of Tasso, the tercets of Dante, and the free verse of Metastasio.[51] During this winter Claire first became intimate with the Russian society in Florence--the Ivanoffs, Waronzoffs, Koutouzoffs, and Buterlins--with whom, as Medwin reported, she was extremely popular.[52]

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[50] See Giulio Delli, *Un Poeta Dimenticato: Pietro Bagnoli samminiatese, 1767-1848* (Castelfiorentino, 1919).

[51] *Rambles in Italy: in the Years 1816....17*, By an American (Baltimore, 1818), pp. 283-284.

[52] This paragraph is based on Claire's journals: Ashley MSS.

In addition to cultivating her social life, Claire found time to study hard at her German; but still she worried about Allegra. She found her own story reflected on the pages of her reading, and even when brooding was crowded out of her busy days, she was tortured night after night with painful dreams. On 15 March she learned that the child had been put in the convent of Bagnacavallo, and she wrote Byron a long letter of disapproval.[53] From that day on she had no peace in her mind about the child. She concocted elaborate plans to kidnap her, and it took the best efforts of Mary, Shelley, and Mrs. Mason to keep her from doing something rash.[54] Her dreams were racked with foreboding. On 6 June she wrote in her journal:

> I had a most distressing dream--that I received a letter that said that Allegra was ill and not likely to live. The dreadful grief I felt made awaking appear to me the most delightful sensation of ease in the world. Just so I think must the wearied soul feel when it finds itself in Paradise, released from the troubling anguishes of the world.[55]

Although in later years Claire convinced herself that her friends had been as indignant as she at Byron's placing Allegra in the convent at Bagnacavallo, the fact is that they almost unanimously approved. "Mary, no less than myself, is perfectly

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[53] Printed in full, from the MS. now in the British Museum, in Prothero, V, 498-500.

[54] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 139-142.

[55] Ashley MSS.

convinced of your conduct towards Allegra having been most irreproachable, and we entirely agree in the necessity, under existing circumstances, of the placing her in a convent near to yourself," Shelley wrote to Byron.[56] Mrs. Mason told Mary that she thought appearances, which were all one had to go on, were all on the side of the way Byron treated Allegra.[57] But Claire was hysterical on the subject and nearly out of her mind with worry, and her friends humored her as much as they honestly could. The obsession that Byron was being brutally unjust grew day by day.

Claire's discontent extended to her situation in Florence. She had the "bustle and occupation" which Shelley considered good for her, but the fille aux mille projets chafed under the few restrictions that governed her. She longed for independence, and she considered such unlikely methods of gaining it as going to Germany as a lady's companion or starting a school on the plan of the one founded by Mrs. Mason's friend, Mathilda Field. In attempt to find some situation which would prove satisfactory for Claire, Mrs. Mason turned after nearly twenty years to an acquaintance of the flowery period of the Peace of Amiens--the Princess Montemilleto Caraffa.

Catherine Wilmot, Lady Mountcashell's travelling companion, has left a description of the Princess as she appeared in 1802:

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[56] Julian Works, X, 354.

[57] Abinger MSS., PM. 13 January 1823 .

> I must give you some idea of this charming little Neapolitan; in size, appearance, and manner she reminds me of my sister Matty, except that she is older, and has dark hair.[58] She is highly educated, accomplish'd, and very sensible, with the reputation of a Belle Esprit, but totally without any of its pretensions. During the horrors of Naples, circumstances threw her into public notice, and amongst the conflict of Parties, she narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by the Lazzaroni. Disgusted therefore with the miseries to which she was witness, and by which she lost some of her nearest relations, Florence became a temporary retreat, and her society is so much esteem'd, that everybody yields her the homage of goodness, amiableness, wit, beauty, and accomplishments.[59]

On 14 January the Princess called on Claire at the Bojtis' and on 17 March Claire talked with her about her position, but although they continued to see a great deal of each other as long as Claire remained in Italy, no permanent arrangements were ever made.[60] She was always a good friend to Claire, who saw more and more of her, until in 1822 Claire climbed nearly every evening to her lovely villa beyond Bello Squardo, higher than the Villa Strozzi, with its magnificent view of Florence immediately beneath and of Fiesole in the distance.

In June Claire decided to spend another summer in Leghorn, where she could have the sea bathing she loved. She had made up her mind to go, even if she had to be alone there, but at

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[58] Martha Wilmot, "Matty," was born in 1775. The Princess Montemiletto was thus probably in her fifties when Claire met her in 1821.

[59] _An Irish Peer on the Continent_, edited by Thomas U. Sadlier (London, 1920), p. 128.

[60] The following paragraphs are based on the Ashley MSS.

the last minute she found company in the person of the Countess Tolomei and her two daughters, Nera and Angiola. On her way down to Leghorn Claire stopped in and around Pisa to visit Mrs. Mason and the Shelleys and to meet their new friends, Edward and Jane Williams, who were staying five miles from the Shelleys, a pleasant walk, at Pugnano. Once at Leghorn, she engaged a German master, Herr Vanzon, and continued her studies assiduously. She had always loved the sea; now she took her first lessons in swimming and bathed every day that the weather was fine. Occasionally she visited the Shelleys at the Bagni di Pisa, but she was away when the black news of Elise's scandalous story came to Mary. Apparently she heard nothing of it until by chance she encountered Elise in Florence five months later.

For six weeks before her return to Florence, Claire visited with the Shelleys; she joined them first at Bagni di Lucca on 9 October, and then, in Pisa after 27 October, at the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, the house on the Lung' Arno which the Shelleys took for the winter. There she met the Guiccioli and Byron's secretary, Lega Zambelli. Byron was expected daily, and it must have been understood that Claire was to leave immediately on his arrival. On 1 November they passed each other on the road between Pisa and Florence.

Back at the Bojtis' Claire's life was lightened by the arrival of a piano. Perhaps when the Gisbornes had been unable to sell theirs before their return to England Shelley had arranged

to have it sent to Claire. She took lessons from the Abate Pucci, Herr Auspitz, Monsieur Flich (probably in singing, German, and piano, respectively). The round of walks and visits and dinners and theater parties began again. But in her free time she turned back to Shakespeare and found in King Lear, which had always moved her deeply, lines strong enough to give expression to her disillusionment and disgust with her fellow man.

On 7 February she met Elise Foggi in Casa Boutourlin. Now, apparently for the first time, Claire heard of the Neapolitan story, for after the first evening on which Elise called on her in Casa Bojti, 10 February, Claire wrote, and then later crossed out intridately, "E's report of Naples and [me(?)]"[61] It must have been that Elise, incapable of fully understanding the attitudes and relationships of her employers, had pieced together a story that seemed to her consistent with the few facts which had come her way, and, most important of all, had therefore believed her own story. The next evening Elise called again. "Spent a very unhappy day," wrote Claire. Throughout the next week she was wretchedly unhappy; she wrote to Shelley and to Mrs. Mason and waited in agony for letters. Such phrases as "I stay in terrible anxiety all day," though they would mean nothing to the uninformed reader, were nevertheless carefully

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[61] Ashley MSS. Claire was at great pains to cross this passage out. The me is still conjectural.

crossed out. Because her discovery of the Hoppner scandal apparently came at a time when Claire was already in a state of hysterical nervousness about Allegra it is impossible to tell how much of her disturbance from February on was from one and how much from the other.

On 18 February she wrote a frantic letter to Byron. She announced that she was about to leave Italy for a new country (Austria), and she begged in the most desperate terms one last chance to see her child.[62] Perhaps her plan to depart was precipitated by a wave of revulsion at the revelation of Elise's story. At any rate, the next day she wrote to Mary to inform her of her immediate departure. Mary sent a servant, Domenico Bini, immediately with a note telling Claire to come first to Pisa, since she ought at least to talk to Mrs. Mason before leaving.[63] So on 21 February she set out for Pisa, where for four days she visited and talked, with Mrs. Mason, with Shelley and Mary, with the Williams family, and with the man who was to be her constant friend for more than a half a century--Edward John Trelawny.

Somehow or other Claire must have been talked temporarily into reason during her visit to Pisa. On 25 February she returned to the Bojtis' and set about extracting from the

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[62] Dowden, op. cit., II, 484-486, from a copy in Claire's hand.

[63] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 157.

semi-literate Elise the letters to Mary and to Mrs. Hoppner which were to deny the Neapolitan scandal. On 9 April she asked Mary, "I wish you would write me back what you wish Elise to say to you, and what she is to say to Madame H. I have tried in vain to compose it." She saw her former servant nearly every day; it was not until 12 April that the letters were finished.[64]

Claire's hard work at a translation of Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit (for Byron, who thought it was being translated for him in Paris)[65] was not enough to keep her from miserably low spirits. As the spring dragged on, her journal became increasingly gloomy. Her terror about Allegra's position increased to a morbid obsession which seems to have had no real basis, since the child was considered rather well off by everyone but Claire, but which must have appeared later to any superstitious mind as "pure anticipated cognition." Her letters to the Shelleys contained one wild scheme after another for extracting the child from the convent by foul means if fair were not practical. Shelley's patience was taxed to the utmost, and he lectured her severely. He seemed to fear for

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[64] Abinger MSS., printed in Shelley and Mary, III, 778. The only reason I can think of for having Elise write to Mrs. Hoppner to deny saying what she had obviously once said was to avert any further attempts by Paolo of blackmail. Once written, the letters would be legal evidence. The Shelleys had spent enough already in lawyer's fees to appreciate this fact.

[65] See below, Chapter III.

her sanity. Of one plan, involving a forged letter, he wrote that it seemed to him "pregnant with irremediable infamy to all the actors in it except yourself."[66] He reminded her that in Milan, when he had advised her not to part from the child unless she was able to face the consequences, she had checked him with unmerited scorn. He gave her sober advice, the kind of advice one gives to a person with limited intellectual resources--

> . . . give up this idle pursuit after shadows, and temper yourself to the season, seek in the daily and affectionate intercourse of friends a respite from these perpetual and irritating projects. Live from day to day, attend to your health, cultivate literature and liberal ideas to a certain extent, and expect that from time and change which no exertion of your own can give.[67]

But this was to expect of Claire more patience than she was capable of mustering. At the end of March the Bojti children became ill with the measles, and in the first week of April, Holy week, the weather turned bleak, cold, and rainy, and Claire developed a distressing cough. On 13 April letters came from both Shelley and Mary inviting her to stay with them. She closed her journal without a further word and left immediately for Pisa. On 23 April she accompanied Edward and Jane Williams to the Gulf of Spezzia, and while they were gone Mary and Shelley heard the bitter news--Allegra had died in the

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[66] Julian *Works*, X, 365-366.

[67] *Ibid.*

convent on 19 April. On 25 April the party returned and Edward Williams met Shelley at the door: "his face bespoke his feelings--his Sister's child was dead and he had the office to break it to her--or rather not to do so but fearful of the news reaching her ear to remove her immediately from this place."[68] The next day Mary and Trelawny took Claire with them back to Spezzia, and on 30 April they moved into Casa Magni at Lerici. On 2 May, by Williams' account, "S[helley] broke the unhappy news to Claire--We were seated in Jane's room talking over the best means to be pursued when she guessed the purpose of our meeting."[69] Her worst nightmare had become a reality.

Shelley's delay in breaking the news had been motivated by a real concern for Claire's sanity. Her almost psychopathic behavior when the child was in the convent had given him real grounds for anxiety. But after the first convulsions, in which she wrote a letter to Byron so shocking that he sent it back to Shelley, she seemed remarkably calm. Mrs. Mason's diagnosis was, as usual, sound. She wrote to Shelley:

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> I rejoice to hear that poor C[laire] has borne her misfortune reasonably, & from what you have told me I do not suppose she will have found my letter unreasonable--Had the child lived she would no doubt have been a constant source of misery, & the first shock being over, I have no doubt C[laire] will [be] more tranquil in future.[70]

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[68] Williams, op. cit.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Abinger MSS., PM. 12 May 1822.

On 21 May Claire went back to Florence, and stopped unexpectedly en route in Casa Silva. Mrs. Mason reported to Shelley while she was still there:

> I was astonished at seeing Claire walk in on Tuesday evening & un poco spalordita[?] because I have not a spare bed now in the house (the Children having outgrown theirs & now obliged to occupy that which I had formerly) and she proposed going to an inn, but preferred sleeping on a sopha where I made her as comfortable as I could, which is but little so--however she is satisfied--I rejoice to see she has not suffered so much as you expected & understand now her former feelings better than at first--when there is nothing to hope or fear it is natural to be calm--I wish she had some determined project--but her plans seem as unsettled as ever & she does not see half the reasons for separating herself from your society that really exist--I regret to perceive her great repugnance to Paris, which I believe to be the place best adapted to her--If she had the temptation of good letters of introduction--but I have no means of obtaining them for her--She intends I believe to go to Florence tomorrow & to return to your habitation in a week--but talks of not staying the whole summer.[71]

She returned to Lerici on 7 June, and for a while the days were calm and pleasant. Shelley wrote to John Gisborne:

> Claire is with us, and the death of her child seems to have restored her to tranquillity. Her character is somewhat altered. She is vivacious and talkative, and though she teases me sometimes, I like her. Mary is not, for the present, much discontented with her visit, which is merely temporary, and which the circumstances of the case rendered indispensable.[72]

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[71] Abinger MSS., n. d.

[72] Julian Works, X, 403.

At Lerici Claire got along beautifully with Jane Williams and her children, Rosalind (called Dina) and Edward Medwin (called Meddy). She referred to them even then as her "grandchildren." The very brevity of the hours of quiet companionship which Jane and Claire enjoyed together intensified in their memories the pleasantness of their association. They had had no time to get on each other's nerves; after the deaths of Shelley and Edward Williams they parted close and affectionate friends, pledged to lifelong devotion. "I have lost my dear den that I had with you," Claire wrote from Vienna, "where I soothed and recovered my spirits by songs and thoughts which approached or drew me towards the world of the imagination, so different from the real round substantial globe we inhabit."[73] She swore that she would willingly lay down her own life if by that sacrifice she could restore to Jane her own dear Edward. Claire regarded Jane's affectionate relationship with Shelley as a pure and unpassionate love. Several years later, in attempting to explain to Jane her own Platonic attachment to her friend in Russia, Monsieur Gambs, she wrote, "I talk to you thus freely because I know you will not believe that I am in love, or that I can have any other feeling than a most sincere and steady

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[73] Abinger MSS., 24 October 1822.

friendship for him. What you felt for Shelley I feel for him."[74]

The calm of Lerici was predestined not to last, but no one could have predicted how literally a storm would wreck the lives of the families there. On 8 July Shelley and Edward Williams were drowned off Viareggio. "Death," wrote Claire to Leigh Hunt, "would be the greatest kindness to us all."[75]

vi

Through the rest of the summer the three women clung together, sharing a single purse. Then one by one they drifted apart. First Claire, on 20 September, departed on the road to Vienna. By Christmas Jane, back in England, had found the friend to whose life, in a few years, she would unite her own: "Hogg is literally what our Shelley described a pearl within an Oyster, but he seldom opens his shell."[1] Mary lingered on for

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[74] Abinger MSS., 27 October 1825. Claire may not have entirely understood the relationship between Shelley and Jane Williams, which was perhaps more intimate than this letter suggests. See White, op. cit., II, 364.

[75] British Museum, Ashley Library 4763, 19 July 1822. This letter has been frequently printed. See T. J. Wise, A Shelley Library (London, privately printed, 1924), pp. 104-105.

[1] Abinger MSS. Probably a reference to Shelley's verse letter to Maria Gisborne, Julian Works, IV, 9.

> You will see Hogg, and I cannot express
> His virtues, though I know they are great,
> Because he locks, then barricades the gate
> Within which they inhabit;--of his wit,
> And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
> He is a pearl within an oyster-shell,
> One of the richest of the deep.

for a year in Italy to see Marianne Hunt through a dangerous confinement, and then on 25 July she too left the paradise of exiles and returned with her child to England.

Claire, traveling north into Austria, saw in everything the gloom of approaching winter. The very inn-kitchens appeared to her like the yawning caverns of hell. But she welcomed the approaching cold and darkness as the most appropriate setting for her personal desolation. She seemed unaware that behind her she had left warm friends and a passionate lover. For Trelawny had fought her departure and implored her to stay and attach herself to him. "I tell you, Clare, . . . that I have, and do love you with the warmest and most fervent and unalterable affection, that every sentiment and sensation that the purest Love has awakened in my heart are all exclusively concentrated in you."[2] It seemed to him inevitable that the two of them, both in a sense outcasts, should be destined for each other, and he had poured out his heart to her. The union was unthinkable to Claire. After the nervous strain and the hysterical storms of emotion on which she had for so long been tossed, she craved just then absolute emotional calm. To her raw nerves any excess, even of the kindest affection, was irritating. She reasoned with him, protested that she could not be happy with him, then for a brief moment

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[2] _Op. cit._, p. 29.

relaxed and threw herself into his arms. For just that little while it seemed that they might be happy together, but as soon as he was away in Genoa Claire realized the futility of it all and fled.[3]

He followed her in an emotional fever as far as Leghorn--

> . . . overpowered by the intense feelings yours had set in motion and finding it totally impossible to convey to you any idea of what I felt by writing--impulse impelling I hastily embarked in the middle of Monday night during a very heavy squall which flew for Leghorn in the fond hope--that the swiftness of the tempest would convey me to you.[4]

His letter, full of flamboyant histrionics and the dramatic exploitation of every appeal which might be expected to work on her sympathies, had the opposite effect to what he had hoped. In every sense he had come too late; Claire had had enough of "impulse impelling." Her letters to him from Vienna were angry and icy cold. She made it clear that she mistrusted him, doubted his sincerity. Was he making fun of her with his melodramatic courtship? After all, he was a married man and a friend of Byron's. As far as Claire could tell, his proposals were just one more mockery.

She had misjudged him, of course. His continuing letters finally convinced her of his sincerity, but there was still no

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 30; Trelawny wrote to her, "I loved you from the first day,--nay before I saw you,--you loathed and heaped on me contumelies and neglect *till we were about to separate.*" Italics are mine.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

hope for their reunion. Her restrained letters and her aloof and independent behavior soon convinced him of his own rashness. He had to admit that he did not have income enough to support her. He came around at last to her own view of herself and admitted that he was not temperamentally constituted to make her happy. A year after their first meeting he wrote:

> And you that are as proud, independent, and tenacious as myself --however deep and fervent our attachment--oh no, Clare--conscious of the superiority of your Mind and Judgement--though Love could make you capable of very great sacrifices--you could not submit to the degradation of becoming its victim.[5]

Claire's attitude never changed, though for many years he regularly repeated his offer. In 1830 she wrote to Mary--

> . . . there is a certain want of sympathy between us, which makes writing to him extremely disagreeable to me. I admire, esteem, and love him; some excellent qualities he possesses in a degree that is unsurpassed, but then it is exactly in another direction from my center and my impetus. He likes a turpid and troubled life. I a quiet one; he is full of fine feelings and has no principles, I am full of fine principles but never had a feeling; he receives all his impressions through his heart, I through my head. Che vuole? *Le moyen de se rencontrer* when one is bound for the North Pole and the other for the South?[6]

Claire may have been on route to the North Pole, but for all her reasoned objectivity she could not part without a pang from her comrade in distress. The journals which she kept while she was in Russia show that in spite of her protestations against

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[6] Abinger MSS., 28 March 1830.

him, she was deeply attached to Trelawny. In the spring of 1825 she wrote:

> I now enjoy the first leisure hour of my life. Grief consumed the tender bloom of youth, and the whole world was a scene of distress and struggling--but now I yield up my soul to all that surrounds me--at ease upon one point that the affection of my dear friend Trelawney [sic] is not changed for me, I dare to look upon Nature as a consoling friend.[7]

She was thrown into fits of depression by the merest rumors of bad news from Greece, and the actual account of his being wounded produced an abject despondency which clouded her days and haunted her sleep with nightmares much as her worry about Allegra had done in 1822. He had written to her that it was her coldness which had driven him to further wanderings, and he did not fail to remind her of their brief moment of complete sympathy which had given him cause to hope. Though poverty, sickness, or sorrow should cling to her, there was one, he wrote, who "will receive you, and press you to his bosom with the same undiminished ardour he did when he first pressed you

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[7] Ashley MSS., 25 May [old style], 6 June [new style] 1825. In counting her anniversaries, Claire probably used the new style date, since the Gregorian calendar [n.s.] was adopted in England in 1751.

there."[8] Wistfully, and not without a pang of regret, Claire turned back in her memory of that time, kept its anniversary in her journal, and indulged a sigh for the futility of the might-have-been:

> Lovely weather. I think a great deal of past times to-day and above all of this day three years. but the sentiments of that time have most likely long ago vanished into air. This is life. So live to nothing but toil and trouble--all its sweets are like the day whose anniversary this is--more transitory than a shade--yet it had been otherwise if Inwalert[9] had been different and I might have been as happy as I am now wretched.[10]

Two weeks later, after a gloomy breakfast on a dark morning, Claire glanced at the newspapers and saw that Trelawny was alive and still in his cave on Mount Parnassus. She rushed into the garden with her head swimming with delight and relief. The wind was throwing the leaves to the ground in showers, and

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[8] This passage, omitted by Harry Buxton Forman from his edition of the Trelawny letters, has been supplied by the kindness of his son. The elder Forman used to think that some one passage in the letters indicated that Claire had submitted to being Trelawny's mistress. This, apparently, was the passage he had in mind. I cannot see that the evidence leads necessarily to any such conclusion. Miss Grylls has had access to the entire Forman collection and she has found there no evidence beyond that which I have presented here. See Grylls, Trelawny (London, 1950), p. 101.

[9] Claire from time to time spelled names in her journals backwards, thus. There seems to have been no rhyme or reason for it. It was far too flimsy a device for concealment, except possibly from the eyes of the children.

[10] Ashley MSS., 25 August [o.s.], 6 September[n.s.] 1825. See note 6 above.

the landscape was threatening with the approach of another Russian winter, but Claire was full of joy and life.[11] She went back to her work with a light step, and spent the evening singing Mozart with M. Gambs.[12]

But to return to 1822, when Claire left Trelawny and travelled to Vienna she did not at first need his friendship. Life in the Austrian capital was friendly, and she was very warmly received. The city was then at the height of the glory which present-day Viennese and tourists so sentimentally lament. In her brother Claire found perfect sympathy: "he is so quiet, good, and mild, that we quite suit one another; and then he allows me to be as wild, and extravagant as I please, in my theories."[13] Claire stayed with Madame Jeannette de Henickstein, an extremely agreeable woman whom she had known in Pisa, probably the sister-in-law of the Orientalist Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall.[14] All five of the other people who lived

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[11] Miss Grylls (Claire Clairmont, p. 165) has pointed out how consistently Claire's reaction to landscape and nature illustrates Coleridge's lines in "Dejection: An Ode":

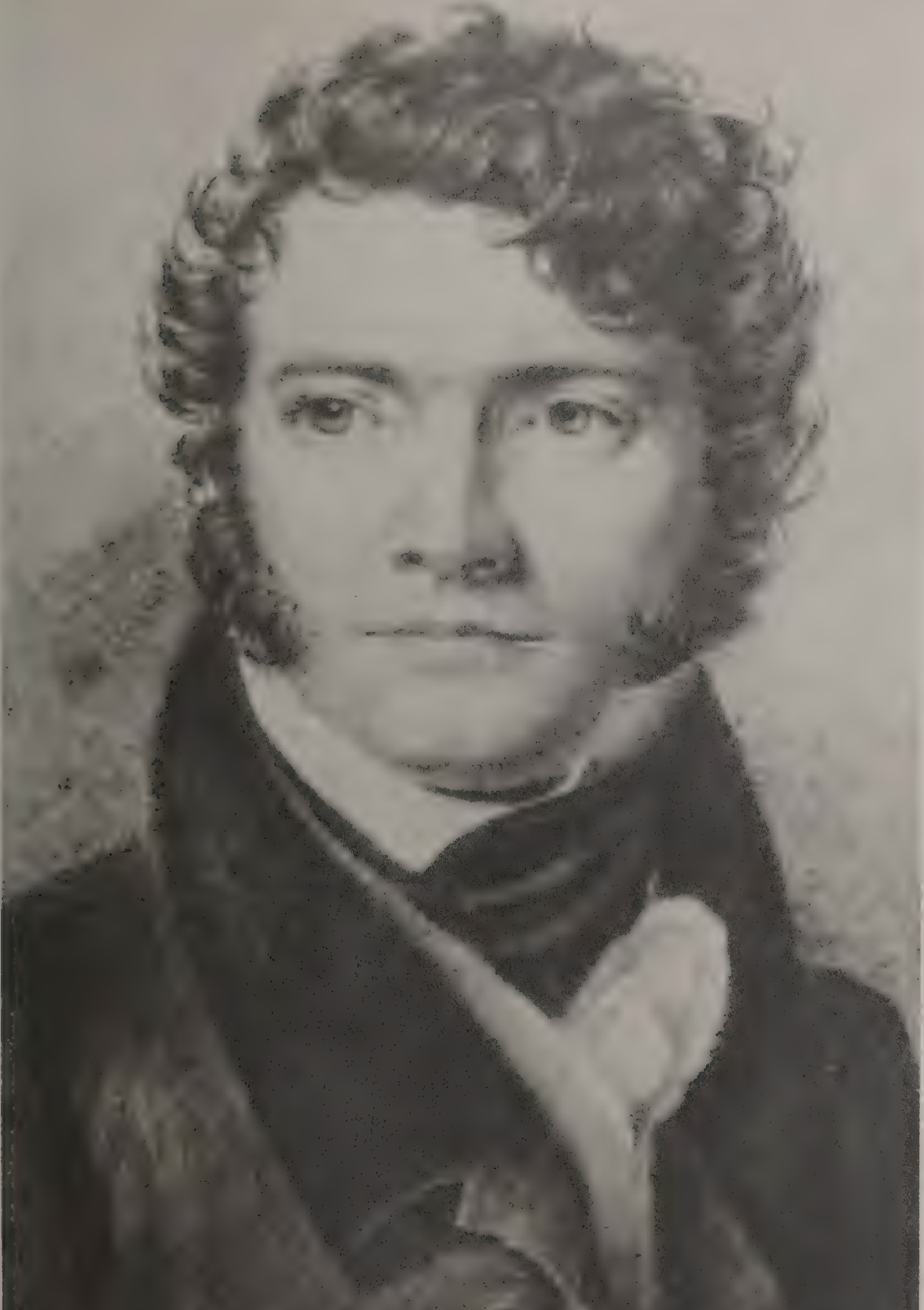
> O Lady, we receive but what we give
> And in our life alone does Nature live.

[12] Ashley MSS., 13 [o.s.], 25 [n.s.] September 1825.

[13] Abinger MSS., 24 October 1822. Trelawny, too, liked what he knew of Charles: ". . . there is an honesty and romance about him mingled with just enough of worldliness and feeling and talent--I should like much to know him."--Letters, p. 23.

[14] Huscher, op. cit., p. 61.

Charles Gaulis Clairmont



there wanted English lessons, and Claire found herself with more than enough to do. Nevertheless, as time went on she discovered more and more disadvantages, all very real indeed, to rob her of the security she had hoped to find in Vienna.

Her first problem was financial, since she eventually was not allowed a government license to teach. Charles was unable to support her, and the money sent by Mary and by Trelawny she hated to accept. Godwin realized that Claire was much worse off than Mary, but to help her was beyond his power. Mr. Tighe and Mrs. Mason, living modestly on their small sinecures, and with two daughters approaching the marriageable age, could not undertake the responsibility, much as they would have liked to. Mrs. Mason, however, had a practical idea. Sincerely worried about the possibility of Claire's starving in a strange land, she took it upon herself to write to Byron, whom she had never met, to suggest that he do something for the bereaved mother of his child. Byron had been genuinely miserable about the death of Allegra and had acceded to all Claire's pitiful last requests. He had a certain amount of respect for Mrs. Mason's opinions, even without having met her. In advising Mary Shelley against a trip to see about Shelley's will he had written, "but you can consult Mrs. Mason, and regulate yourself by the mechanism of 'Claire's Minerva.'"[15]

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[15] Abinger MSS., 10 September 1822. To the best of my knowledge this letter is still unpublished.

In return for her good intentions Mrs. Mason received an insult. Byron wrote her a curt refusal "with a sting in its tail." Mrs. Mason wrote to Mary that she had thought until then that Byron had behaved wisely about Allegra:

> I am an old woman & something of a philosopher--and I no more give full credit to the ravings of an angry Poet than I do to those of a disappointed girl--I thought better of Lord B-- before I received his letter (or I should never have written to him) but a person who can lightly doubt of the solemn assurance of another, casts a reproach upon his own integrity.[16]

She tried again to make her position clear to him, but with no better results. She wrote again to Mary:

> No doubt you have heard from Lord B--of his having written to me again--As it is impossible that he should understand me, I will not trouble him with any more letters, but shall be much obliged to you if you would tell him that I give full credit to his assurances of not meaning to offend me, that I thank him for his good opinion, & am glad we part in peace--I see he totally mistakes my motives, looking on me as a mere partizan of C--, when in truth my first letter to him (the offspring of cool reflection) was produced as much by respect for genius, as by compassion for misfortune--Let C--'s conduct have been what it may, the story of A-- is that which has published her imprudence to the world; & if she comes to any fatal end for want of means of subsistence, it will remain an eternal reproach on the character of Lord B-- Having heard of the furious letter from Lerici as well as others of a similar nature, had I not considered him as a high-minded man I should never have applied to him in her behalf--but I had some vague idea that a noble generosity, combined with a tender recollection of the departed babe, would have induced him to settle some small annuity on the Mother; who if she be what he asserts her, has even stronger claims on a benevolent heart than a parent conscious of upright feelings & with no cause of self-reproach but weakness in conduct--As Lord B-- has confided this affair to you, I hope with your aid he will yet be persuaded to do what he may one day rejoice to have done.[17]

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[16] Abinger MSS., PM. 13 January [1823].

[17] Abinger MSS., 14 January 1823.

There was apparently widespread discussion about Byron's obligation to Claire. Hogg wrote to Jane Williams, "I cannot doubt that the Giaour will do for C. what he promised: his evil Genius will compel him to do it with a bad grace; he will lose both the gain of a bad action & the credit of a good."[18] What Byron "promised," possibly in a conversation with Mary, was never carried out, but a rumor reached Mary after his death that at the very end he had said something to Fletcher about wanting to do something for Claire.[19] The fact that she had been right about Allegra, when all reason and all reasonable friends had reassured him of the wisdom of his behavior towards the child, must have been insufferably bitter to him. The fact remains that Byron never did do anything to provide for Claire.

Claire never believed the rumor, and attributed it to the kindness of the good-natured Fletcher. She was certainly never given reason to believe it. Claire's troubles in Vienna were not only financial. She was for a while desperately ill. Apparently when she looked back on it Claire decided that Vaccà had been right: the inflammation of her glands was tubercular. Years later she wrote to her sister-in-law:

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[18] T. J. Hogg, *After Shelley: The Letters of Thomas Jefferson Hogg to Jane Williams*, edited by Sylvia Norman, (London, 1934), p. 10.

[19] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 298.

> Our family is consumptive and very delicate; our vivacity, our readiness to oblige, our energy gives us an appearanse of strength which we do not possess. I was dying ten time from twenty to thirty-six. . . I nearly died at Vienna when I was four-and-twenty--I grew skeleton thin--I had constant low fever --I could not eat--and thro for [*sic*] months and my brother wrote to Mrs. S[helley] that he did not think she would ever see me again.[20]

One must allow for the exaggeration of thirty-four years, but it appears that Claire was alarmingly ill in Vienna. Mrs. Mason showed one of her letters to Vaccà and Pantini, and both were much disturbed. She wrote to Mary, "Tantini says her only chance, if she holds out till spring, is to go & live in the sea (which she is so fond of) like a mermaid--if Lord B-- will supply her with the means of doing so comfortably, I shall forgive him everything."[21] Mary sent money for medical assistance immediately, and despite the dreary prognosis Claire managed to get through the winter.

The third horror of the Viennese winter was political. No sooner had Claire arrived than she and Charles were dogged by police spies, set on by an anonymous letter to the police reporting that the two English had been associated with these notorious subversives, Godwin and Shelley. The Metternich gestapo worked thoroughly, and the tremendous quantity and the

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[20] Unpublished letter (12 July 1856) in the MS collection of Dr. Walter Clairmont, cited hereafter as Clairmont MSS.

[21] Abinger MSS., PM. 6 February 1823.

detailed quality of the Dossier Clairmont are astonishing even by present-day standards of red tape and paper work.[22] Jane Williams heard the news from Mrs. Godwin: ". . . they had been ordered to quit Vienna in five days. This after her reception is an enigma I cannot solve. Poor girl, her bitter destiny still pursues her." Then before she had finished her letter Jane heard from Mrs. Godwin that the orders had been revoked, but that the police were still annoying them: ". . . it seems that the Emperor has lately published an edict to prevent the establishment of foreign Instructors both male and female particularly the English, so that their prospects there are very gloomy."[23] Charles managed finally to get a license to teach, and he went on to a distinguished academic career in Vienna.

But for Claire there seemed to be nothing but insecurity. Even her sanctuary with Madame de Henickstein, where she lived on the footing of a friend of the house, lost what little security it had promised. Charles wrote to Mary--

> . . . the old grandmother died; Mrs. H[enickstein]'s sister-in-law dying; one of the daughters extremely ill; the bridegroom of the other, to whom she was to have been married in a week, or two, changes his mind and leaves the poor girl in the lurch.[24]

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[22] Miss Grylls has discussed this aspect of Claire's Viennese sojourn very thoroughly.--*op. cit.*, pp. 165-175. See also Huscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 ff.

[23] Abinger MSS., 22 December 1822.

[24] Abinger MSS., 22 February 1823.

Everything conspired to make the end of Claire's stay in Vienna as miserable as possible.

In the face of her poor health, Claire's decision to go to Russia, in defiance of the advice and entreaties of all her friends, seems suicidal until one realizes how uncomfortable she had been in Vienna. Even so, her departure was exactly what Trelawny called it: "compulsive emigration to the North." Charles attempted to explain the decision to Mary:

> She has . . . almost closed an agreement with the Countess Zotoff, daughter of Prince Kurakin one of the Russian Ministers, to go to Petersburg. She gives but about £75. The Countess pleases us both but you know the Russians are not much to be depended on. She has two beautiful daughters of 14 & 16 whose companion Claire is to be rather than Governess. But C[laire] is in great hopes that as the girls in Russia marry early, they will soon be off hand and that then, as the Countess' health is not robust, she may be tempted to go and fix in Italy or some warm climate.[25]

On 22 March 1823 Claire left Vienna and travelled north with the Countess. For nearly a year nobody heard from her. Mary was disturbed, but knowing Claire as well as she did, she suspected that the silence was motivated by a love of mystery and suspense. By the spring of 1824 she was settled in Moscow, as governess to the children of Zachar Nicolaivitch, a prosperous lawyer, and his strong-minded wife, Maria Ivanovna. The life was a far cry from the companionship of

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[25] *Ibid.* See below, p. 160.

the Shelleys which she had for so many years enjoyed, but it was not without its compensations. She undoubtedly believed herself miserable, and she certainly had the usual periods of depression and sometimes of ill health, but on the whole her journal for eight months of 1825 shows that she had a busy and entertaining life. She constantly deplored the character of the Russian people, but several of them became her life-long friends.

Claire's idea of what she wanted to do had always differed from what others had thought best for her. Mrs. Mason, whose opinion Claire always claimed to hold in highest respect, wrote to Mary in 1824:

> Before she went any farther than Vienna I told her my opinion very candidly, I said I would rather be obliged to sit behind Mrs. G[odwin]'s counter from morning to night than be anyone's dame de compagnie; but on that subject we never could agree--I also warned her about the Russians, & I fear she has found them still worse than I represented. . . How often I regret her not having married Mr. P[eacock].[26]

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[26] Abinger MSS., 22 August 1824. Maria Gisborne also thought it a pity that Claire had not married Shelley's friend: "Poor banished Claire! I wish she could enjoy a few years of happiness and independence before her youth is entirely passed away --How much suffering she might have been spared had she married Peacock--It is an advantage that both of them have lost. Remember us very kindly to her when you write."--Abinger MSS., 20 August 1832. But Claire had actually disliked Peacock when she knew him in England, and had made a point of staying in her room when he called. She came to think much more highly of him in her old age: "I have a great esteem and admiration for Peacock--he is a rare specimen of noble humanity--and so generous and unselfish--May he flourish many years!"--Unpublished letter to Dina Williams Hunt in the library of the University of Texas, 31 December 1862. There is no mention of Peacock's courtship in any source at the time, and it is impossible to determine just when his proposal was made. See above, p.71, note 36.

But once in Russia she had "much to svagare her."[27] The summers were spent at the spacious country estate called Islavsky, on the banks of the Moscow River. The countryside was extremely beautiful, and there were long walks in the woods, rowing on the river, excursions for forget-me-nots and strawberries, swinging and bathing and baseball playing with the children. Claire delighted to stroll from balcony to balcony of the house; she never could count all the balconies at Islavsky. She joined enthusiastically in the philosophical discussions, the practical jokes and charades, the music in the evenings. A comedy was written and rehearsed and produced; a newspaper, the Islavsky Gazette, was written and read with great laughter; lectures were delivered on esthetics and history. Many visitors came and went all summer--musicians and officers--and Claire joined in the games and dancing. The long summer, warm and bright as Italy, was a happy time.

Claire did not lack constant congenial companionship. The tutor in the family, whose position corresponded to hers as governess, was the young German of whom Claire had written affectionately to Jane, M. Gambs. He it was who wrote the comedy impromptu, and in the evenings he read from poems and tales of his own composing. He delivered lectures on history and philosophy to the family, read the Gazette, and told amusing tales of his student days. He was a musician as well and

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[27] The following account is based on Claire's journal, Ashley MSS.

accompanied Claire as she sang the exquisite Mozart songs she loved. He seemed to her more like Shelley than anyone she had known, and she was thrilled to discover that he, too, had written a poem on intellectual beauty, his "Ode to Urania." It was also wonderful to Claire that he, like Shelley, was born on 4 August. He understood and fulfilled her ideal of a sympathetic and affectionate friend. For her name day he produced a hollow cake, under which he had concealed a dove with the following verses:

Bonnement, avec indulgence
De l'amitie recois les vœux
Elle parle dans l'innocence
D'un coeur sincere, affecteux.
Loin de moi le projet frivole
De t'incenser comme un idole,
Que des sens profane l'erreur;
Je suis le culte d'Uranie;
Quand elle regne sur ma vie
Ton nom peut vivre dans mon coeur.

Je veux y graver ton image:
Ton œil voilé de souvenirs,
Ton âme enflammant ton visage
De haine pour de vains plaisirs.
Cette ame encor compatissante
D'une creature souffrante
Partageant l'angoisse et les maux;
Et pour combattre l'injustice,
Prête a partager le supplice
Des Laons livrès aux bourreaux.

Apres les fureurs de l'orage
D'un lac, les Cygnes dispersés
S'Eloignent enfin du rivage,
À se reunir empressés.
Aprés de penibles allarmes
Ainsi tu peux gouter les charmes
D'un bonheur aux vertus allié.
Et dans les champs de l'Hesperie
Consacrer les jours de ta vie
Aux doux loisirs de l'Amitie.[28]

Unfortunately the furies of the storm had not permanently subsided, and the stay in the garden of the Hesperides was short lived. Shortly after this anniversary her pupil Johnny fell ill with scarlet fever, and no sooner had he recovered than little Dunia, just over six years old, the bright and vivacious child who had for a while filled Allegra's place for her, died after three days of terrible illness. "A thousand wounds," wrote Claire, "bled afresh in my heart."

With the onset of winter the family moved back into the city. There was less for Claire to do, since her primary job had been to give lessons to Dunia. She took a few piano lessons herself from the fascinating pianist Genishsta,[29] but the time dragged. At the end of 1826 she went to stay with the beautiful Princess Galitsin, and she went out to give lessons to the Ivanoff and Possnikoff children, but gained a reputation for eccentricity, since she made a great display of her militant feminism:

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[28] Ashley MSS., 12[o.s.], 24[n.s.] August 1825. The French is thus in the MS.

[29] Ashley MSS., quoted by Grylls, op. cit., p. 189.

> The Prince Alexander and the Count Rastopchin said my dislike to men was affected, that they were sure I was always falling in love and that either one or the other had only to make love to me for a day or two and I should become amoureuse folle! Amiable delightful creatures! I must really take great care of my poor heart lest I should not only fall in love with one but perhaps with both at once.[30]

Among the friends of the Princess she was treated as a social equal. She was intensely vivacious. She heard on every side how attractive she was and realized that she could enchant a company with her singing, titillate them with her unorthodox opinions, or send them into gales of laughter with her somewhat boisterous clowning. She could reassure herself that the role of maiden aunt which she was consciously assuming was her own best wish. She had turned down offers of marriage from talented, amiable, and glamorous men, and other women had taken over the company of those she had spurned--Peacock and Henry Reveley and Trelawny.

The fact that she was having her own way was, however, often cold comfort. She did not really like Russia; she fell into foolish quarrels and was aware of a steady deterioration of her character. The winters were intolerable to one who loved the Mediterranean. She wondered how the Russians could possibly believe in a hell of fire and flame, which ought in all reason

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[30] Huscher, op. cit., pp. 94-95. Claire's journal from 21 December 1826 to 6 September 1827 is available only in the excerpts printed by Huscher, op. cit., pp. 90-99. The original MSS. have not been located in Vienna since the war.

to be most attractive to them. When she was lonely and ill she recopied in her journal the lines from Dante which best expressed her own concept of a living hell:

> [Tu] proverai siccome sa di sale
> Lo pane altrui e come è dure calle
> Lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui scale.[31]

In May of 1828 she left the cold of Russia forever behind her, but still eating the bread of strangers she departed as companion to Madame Kaisaroff, the wife of a personally formidable general, and their ailing twelve-year-old daughter Natalie. They proceeded to the Baths of Tuplitz, near Dresden, in no good humor, for Claire was forced by their quarreling to quit them en route.[32] She had engaged to go as English tutor to Natalie in return for travelling expenses, and despite the quarrel Madame Kaisaroff saw to it that Claire got to the baths with them and took the much-needed *Kur*. But Claire's intention was to get to England as soon as possible so as to join Charles during his visit there with his Austrian wife, Antonie, and their two little girls, Pauline and Clara. She eventually found a travelling companion in Miss Esperance Sylvestre, one of the governesses of the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar,[33] and on 16 October she arrived in London, three months after her brother.[34]

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 98. The quotation is from *Il Paradiso*, XVII, 58-60.

[32] Abinger MSS., 22 July 1828. For descriptions of Madame Kaisaroff and Natalie, quoted from the Ashley MSS., see Grylls, *Claire Clairmont*, pp. 257-261.

[33] Clairmont MSS., 26 July 1856.

[34] Godwin MSS.

Almost as soon as Claire arrived Godwin set to work on a new novel, a paraphrase of the old ballad of the babes in the woods, to be called Cloudesley. As he progressed in age, Godwin found more and more difficulty in producing new ideas and relied to an ever increasing extent on the suggestions of others.[35] The fresh influences of 1828 and 1829 are apparent in this, his fifth novel. Claire's arrival, with her colorful tales of her travels, inspired Godwin to work on the opening chapters, which are set in Russia. Trelawny had called on Godwin on 21 May 1828, and he stalks through Cloudesley in the person of Borromeo.[36] The book is distinguished by vivid first-hand descriptions of scenes near Vienna, in Russia, and in Italy. One of these passages, the stunning description of the waterfall of Terni, was lifted verbatim from a letter from Shelley to Peacock,[37] and it is not surprising that Mary has been held responsible for some of the direct description.[38] Godwin undoubtedly took whatever he could get from whoever was

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[35] For a letter from Godwin to Mary, begging her for help in finishing a work on which he had run out of ideas, 13 April 1832, see Mrs. Marshall, op. cit., II, 241-242.

[36] Mary included Trelawny in the novel begun about that time and published in 1830, the same year as Cloudesley--the character of Hernan de Faro in Perkin Warbeck.

[37] Julian Works, X, 4-5 and Cloudesley, (London, 1830), III, 138-139.

[38] See George Woodcock, William Godwin: A Biographical Study, (London, 1946), pp. 230-231.

willing to help. But Mary had been back in England for years, and it was not until Claire landed that Godwin had the incentive to begin the work. It is not necessary to assume that the descriptions of Vienna and St. Petersburg were actually written by Claire (or by Charles), but there can be no doubt that they provided Godwin with the material. Nevertheless, it is not at all impossible that Claire took a real hand in the writing. She resumed her attempts at authorship at about this time, and it is clear from her attitude about her short story, "The Pole," published two years later as by the author of Frankenstein, that she was not averse to having her work appear over the name of another. Her 1830 letters bear witness to her particular and eager interest in the reception of the book; she wrote to Mary, "You may imagine how anxious I am to hear how you like Cloudesley and what reception it meets with from the public."[39] She wrote to Jane Williams, also, for her opinion of the book, which, fortunately, had a good critical reception.

Claire stayed a year in England, visiting with Godwin and Mary. She admired Percy Florence excessively, but he seems

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[39] Abinger MSS., 28 March 1830. For some reason Mrs. Marshall omitted this sentence when she published the letter, op. cit., pp. 199-203. It shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Claire, not Mary, was intimately familiar with the novel in the period while it was being written.

not to have liked her.[40] She renewed her acquaintance with Jane Williams, now living as Jane Hogg, and the mother of a baby girl called Prudentia. She got to know her amiable but conventional sister-in-law, Tonie, and the young Clairmonts. And again she saw Trelawny. The flame which he had been nursing with a certain fidelity for more than six years received a sudden dousing with cold water. The six years had changed Claire. She herself had complained in her journal of the steady deterioration which was the result of the living death of being a governess. The role of good respectable maiden aunt which she had adopted had become fixed, alas, all too firmly ever to be abandoned. Trelawny preferred her letters to actual conversation because "you are becoming so horridly prudish--and sister-like insensible." His tone was jocular, but the implications were melancholy: "I consider you very fish-like--bloodless--and insensible--you are the counterpart of Werter--a sort of bread butter and worsted stockings--like Charlotte fit for 'suckling fools and chronicling beer.' Adieu old Aunt."[41] In a letter to Mary he expressed

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[40] She wrote back to Mary after her departure: "How delighted I was with the news of Percy's health as also with his letter though I am afraid it was written unwillingly and cost him a world of pains. Poor child he little thinks how much I am attached to him. I thought him cold but afterwards he discovered so much intellect in all his speeches, and so much originality in his doings that I willingly pardoned him for not being interested in anything but himself."--Abinger MSS., 28 March 1830. See also below, p. 169n.

[41] Letters, p. 116.

his discontent: "she talked of nothing but worsted stockings and marrying--the only doubt to my mind is which is worse--but if I am condemned to one--I think I must take the former."[42]

On 18 September 1829 Claire returned to the Kaisaroffs in Dresden. Charles went back to Vienna alone on November 14, and his family followed on 30 March 1930.[43] Trelawny wrote after Claire to ask her to come to Italy to help take care of his daughter Zella (by the sister of his companion Odysseus) who was arriving soon from Greece. But Claire missed her chance. For some reason she had a horror of returning to Italy just then, and even threatened to break with Madame Kaisaroff when it was suggested that they spend the next winter there.[44] It was decided instead to go to Nice, to which Claire had no objection. There is no way of knowing why, later in the year, Claire changed her mind and wrote suggesting that at last she join Trelawny and take over the education of Zella. On 4 January

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[42] Abinger MSS. *N.V.*; quoted by Grylls, *Trelawny*, p. 153. Miss Grylls reads this as though the worsted stockings and potential marriage were Claire's. Undoubtedly they were Claire's recommendations for Trelawny. He was notorious for never wearing stockings, even in extreme old age, and almost as soon as Claire heard that Trelawny was returning to England, she wrote to Jane to see that he did not get his feet wet and fall ill. --Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1827.

[43] Godwin MSS.

[44] Ashley MSS., 28 March 1830. This interesting letter, describing the winter in Dresden, is almost complete in Mrs. Marshall, *op. cit.*, II, 199-203.

1851 he wrote to reject her offer.[45] She was too late--too late for everything. The tide was at the ebb.

vii

When Claire left England at the end of 1829 she still had nearly half a century to live. In many ways the years followed the pattern established after Shelley's death. Year in, year out, she ascended and descended alien stairs as a governess and companion. In her old age she claimed to have brought up fifteen children not her own.[1] It was a bleak life, and she cannot be said to have met it uncomplainingly, but she seasoned it with a wry and sardonic humour and leavened it with an unfailing devotion to two families--those of her old friend Mrs. Mason and of her brother Charles.[2]

From 1832 to 1836 Claire was in Italy, attached to the Bennet family, acquaintances of Trelawny. She lived much of the time with Mrs. Mason, and shared the misery of Laurette's bad marriage to the Corsican Galloni, and the joy of Nerina's story-book marriage to Bartolomeo Cini. In spite of her long

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[45] Letters, pp. 137-139

[1] Clairmont MSS., diary of Pauline Clairmont, ca. 1877.

[2] A good summary of Claire's activities in her later years is in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, pp. 203-222. I shall concentrate here on the aspects which have not been fully treated there.

hours of work she managed to get two pieces written and published, but she came to realize that she had not Mary's easy talent for writing professionally. Trelawny saw her for a little while in 1831 and was shocked. "Her spirits are broken, and she looks fifty," he wrote to Mary.[3]

Trelawny was able to provide one real pleasure for Claire's years in Italy. He arranged for her to visit with Jane Boccella, the charming Lucchese Marchesa who had kindly undertaken the care of his daughter Zella during his absence in America. Jane Boccella was an English girl, with an independent fortune, who had married an Italian, the brother of the well-known poet and minister of education, Cesare Boccella. She was childless in 1832, and loving and desiring children she gladly adopted the child of her good friend. "The Bocella is delightful," Claire wrote to Mary, "--talented and high-minded and frank-hearted--we are very intimate--without being at all in love with Trelawny she has a great enthusiasm for him."[4] Claire and Trelawny both observed the same things about her: "so brave and yet so weak --so vain and yet so loving--impelled by instinct to act nobly

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[3] Letters, pp. 166-167.

[4] Abinger MSS., 25 September 1833. For this letter and another from the same period, 9 March 1834, see Appendix G.

--and by education to be the veriest trifler--the emotions of a generous soul struggling to free itself--

'A chain of lead around a soul of fire.'"[5]

Claire rejoiced in the frank and affectionate side of Jane, but she too realized what a limited education the girl had had and wisely avoided discussing principles and theories.

Zella was a robust and passionate child, very much like her father, with what he termed "a soul of fire." She was just eight when Claire first saw her in 1833 and given to sensational temper tantrums. She was altogether too much for the gentle Jane and became more and more a problem child.[6] And Jane became less and less able to cope with the problem as her own attempts to produce a family resulted in one miscarriage after another. By 1835 she longed to have the unmanageable child off her hands. Claire somewhat officiously threw cold water on her suggestion that Zella be put in an English school in Leghorn, because she felt that Trelawny would not approve. Claire's alternative plan was that the girl be placed in a Florentine boarding school until something better opened up for her. To this Trelawny reluctantly acceded, though he loathed the very idea of a school. The prolonged debate produced strained

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[5] Letters, p. 186.

[6] The following account is drawn from the Abinger MSS. and the Trelawny Letters, passim.

relations between Jane and Claire, and finally their friendship broke up altogether.

Early in 1836 Zella was established according to Claire's plan in the school in Florence, an obedient and popular student, but discouragingly slow at her lessons. Claire stood by as Zella's principal protector, and she interested the Bennets in the child. It was decided that since Trelawny had returned from his American adventures, his daughter might best be sent to him in England.

Surprisingly enough, Mary Shelley at this time came forward with an offer to adopt the willful child whom she had never seen. Claire, always quick to defend Zella and to see her best side, nevertheless hastened to quash the suggestion: "You cannot think of adopting her; she has fine dispositions but a perverse cross in them which requires unremitting attention to make her become good or clever."[7] Claire herself loved having the child around. She reported that when Zella was at Lucca everybody thought she was Jane's, but that since she was in Florence the story, which Claire with perverse glee took care to nourish, was that she was Claire's own child. She had not long to enjoy her little ward, for during the summer means were found to send her to her father.

Godwin and Trelawny saw a great deal of each other in the spring of 1832.[8] In March Godwin read the Adventures of a

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[7] Abinger MSS., 15 March 1836.

[8] Godwin MSS.

Younger Son, which had appeared in the previous year, and shortly afterwards he renewed his acquaintance with the author at a tea at Mary's. The acquaintance ripened into friendship, and at least once a month Trelawny dined with the Godwins at their house in the Strand, where he irritated Mrs. Godwin by constantly referring to her Jane as "Claire," but gave great pleasure to Godwin himself, whose young admirers had become rare. In 1835, after his return from America, Trelawny went around to see them in their tiny dwelling at Palace Yard, Whitehall, described by Harriet Martineau as under the roof of the Houses of Parliament, where Godwin was spending his last months with an office and a government salary, in a snug and comfortable apartment with coals and candle.[9]

Although Trelawny could never forgive Godwin's treatment of Shelley, he could still admire the original thinker who had stirred the imagination with Political Justice and Caleb Williams. He liked to see a resemblance to Godwin in the features of Percy Florence, at a time when everyone else was still looking hopefully for at least the outward signs of a resemblance to Shelley. "Better far the Godwins," wrote Trelawny to Claire,"--if we are not to have a Percy Shelley--let's have a Godwin--with a little of the father's leaven to quicken the good and wholesome somewhat slow stuff of which the philosopher

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[9] The best description of Godwin's last years is in Harriet Martineau, Autobiography, edited by Maria Weston Chapman (Boston, 1877), I, 300-305.

is made." In this same letter, of 23 March 1836, he reported, "Godwin and your mother are no more affected by time than the leaning tower at Pisa--bending with the weight of years--who can say when they are to fall?"[10] Three days later Trelawny dropped around for a visit, but found the philosopher out. Godwin came home and wrote in his diary: "Trelawny calls n[ot at home]. Cough. Snow." It was the last entry he ever wrote, after four decades of daily records, religiously kept. After ten days of a "catarrhal fever" he died on 7 April.

In November of 1836 Claire came to England with the Bennets, who settled at Winkfield Park, near Windsor, and for about two

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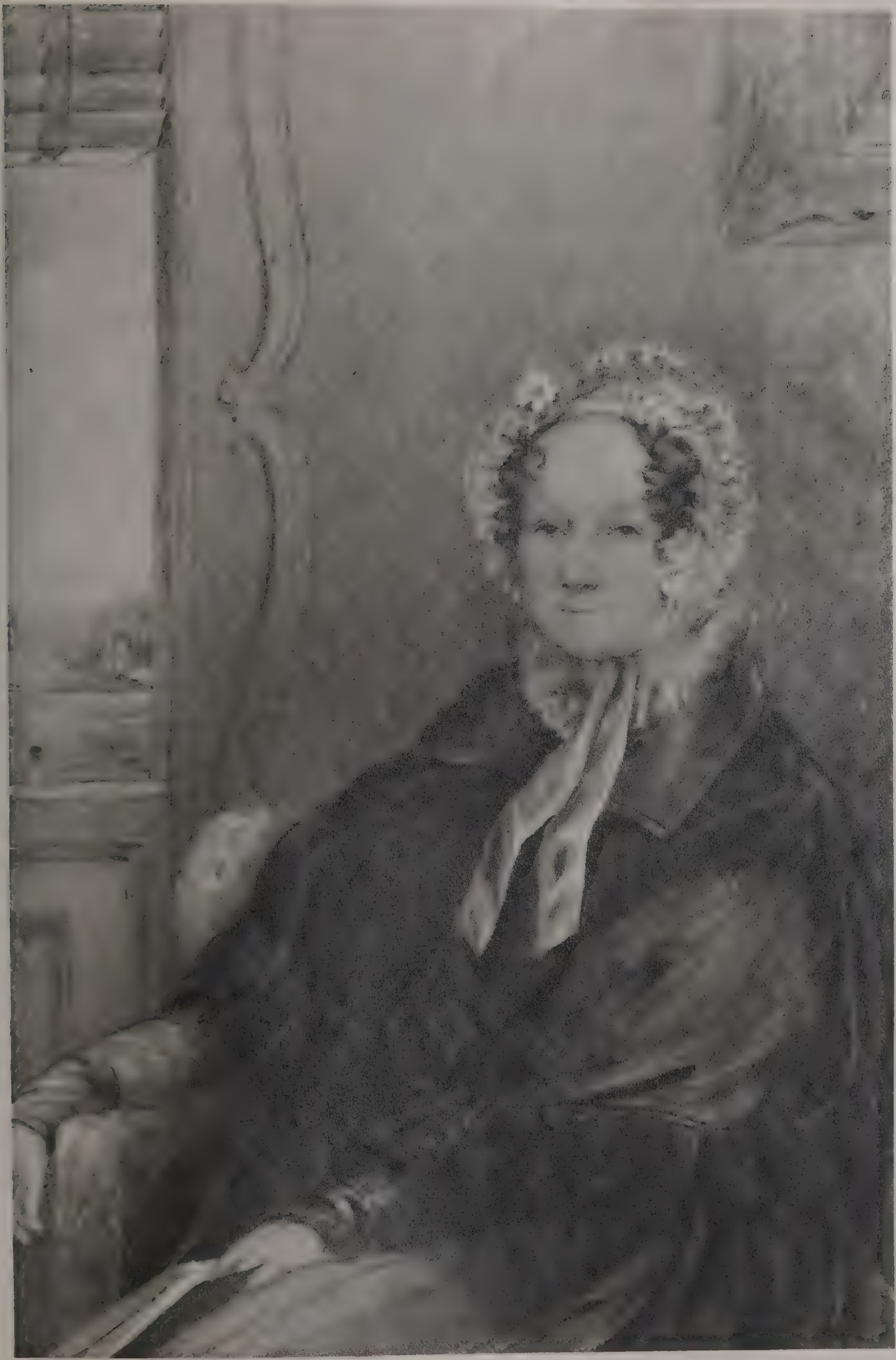
[10] *Letters*, p. 197. Many years before, Shelley and Mary had watched the death of the Godwin they had worshiped. In his verse letter to Maria Gisborne, 1 July 1820, (Julian *Works*, IV, 9), Shelley had written:

> You will see
> That which was Godwin,--greater none than he;
> Though fallen--and fallen on evil times--to stand
> Among the spirits of our age and land,
> Before the dread tribunal of *to come*
> The foremost,--while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb.

"A distinguished member of society--a Patriot and an enlightened lover of truth & virtue," Mary had written in a fictionalized portrait, whom now, "his friends remembered as a brilliant vision which would never return to them again--the memory of what he had been died away as years passed and he who had before been a part of themselves & of their hopes was now no longer counted as among the living."--See Elizabeth Nitchie, "Mary Shelley's *Mathilda*: An Unpublished Story and Its Biographical Significance," *Studies in Philology*, XL (July, 1943) 454 and note.

Claire Clairmont



years Claire continued on there as governess to Charlotte and Gertrude Bennet. Then, sometime in 1839 or 1840, she returned to London and gave lessons until the death of her mother in 1841.[11] In later years Claire looked back with considerable satisfaction on the rightness of her behavior:

> A Child must take care of a Parent and not leave them to the care of others. In the spring of 36 my Mother lost her husband--I never thought of coming home until then--she was under his care, had his income and his company--but when she lost him, and no Child in England, I saw the necessity of returning--I could not leave her so utterly alone--although she had very kind friends--and by November of 36 I was in England--and never left it again till my poor Mother died. I think I only behaved as every Child ought to behave to its Mother.[12]

After the death of her mother Claire negotiated an arrangement by Amory by which £4000 of the £12,000 she was to receive after the death of the evergreen Sir Timothy was invested in an annuity, from which she received £30 a quarter. With this small independence plus £100 which she borrowed from Mary she bade farewell to the life of a governess and went to live in Paris. She was in excellent health and good company ("I cannot tell you how enchanted I am with all the Rue de Clichy set [the Boinvilles and Turners]--what rare people; how handsome they are,

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[12] Clairmont MSS., 16 June 1856. Immediately after Godwin's death Mary set about preparing a memoir and edition of his letters for the benefit of Mrs. Godwin. She enlisted also all the assistance she could in an attempt, finally successful, to have Godwin's small salary paid to his wife until her death. In this she was aided by Caroline Norton's excellent advice.--Mrs. Marshall, op. cit., II, 275-277.

how intellectual, how good.") and happier than she could ever remember being.[13] She stayed in France, most of the time in Paris at Rue Neuve Clichy 3, until 1846.

During those four years Claire saw many of her old friends and had the leisure to enjoy their company. When Dina Williams was in love with Henry Hunt, one of Leigh Hunt's many children, Claire entertained Dina in Paris long enough to give her a chance to forget her suitor. When it appeared that distance merely lent enchantment, Claire took the part of the young lovers against the disapproval of Jane Hogg and rejoiced to see them happily married.[14] Perhaps it was this affair which gave

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[13] Professor Jones, in Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 147n., says that Claire was one of the friends visited by Mary, Percy Florence, and Knox when they passed through Florence on their first Continental trip in 1840. This contradicts Claire's own statement that she did not leave England before the death of her mother (albeit after twenty years she might have suffered an error in memory), and I have been unable to discover any evidence that she was in Paris before 1841. Apparently Claire spent the autumn and winter of 1841 there, then returned to London early in the spring. On 4 March Mary wrote expressing her surprise that Claire had popped off to Paris without saying goodbye.--*Ibid*., II, 151-152.

[14] Abinger MSS., 23 August 1842, 29 November 1842, and 6 April 1843. Claire remained a friend and admirer of Dina throughout her life. She did not share Trelawny's horror at Dina as she became stout and middle-aged. From 1869 on Trelawny's letters refer to her as bloated with beer, or like a monthly nurse, fed on porter, stout, and gin. (These passages were omitted by Forman from his edition of the letters, and have been supplied from the MSS.) Claire, on the other hand, remembered "Dina's native elegance." --Abinger MSS., 3 April 1836.

her the zest for match-making which occupied her for many of the following years.

Many of Claire's Russian friends were in Paris during Claire's stay. Madame Ivanhoff was there with her son Alexy, who was there as the Russian Vice-Consul. When Claire was seriously ill in 1844 she it was who came to the rescue:". . . no mother could nurse a child as she has nursed me," Claire told Mary.[15] Claire's old pupil Betty Zotoff, now married to Prince Czernicheff, came to Paris in 1842, and Claire saw a great deal of her and her children until in the spring of 1844 the Prince was appointed Governor General of Warsaw, and the family left France.

At about the time the Czernicheff family departed Claire heard from another Russian friend that the old General Kaisaroff who had so terrified her when she was a governess in his family had died and that Natalie, now in possession of a fine fortune, was coming to Paris with her mother in the summer. Natalie was thirty-eight, having survived somehow the innumerable ailments and treatments of her youth, and was still unmarried. Claire immediately set out to find a husband for her. She thought first of the studious son of Lady Dorothea Campbell, but unfortunately for her match-making the boy turned out to be engaged already to another. Her second try was for the charming young friend of Percy Florence, the companion of Mary's travels,

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[15] Abinger MSS., 20 November 1844.

Alexander Knox. She wasted no time in informing Mary of the scheme: "I have no doubts he would please her for he is handsome and talented and gentlemanlike--the thing is would she please him." Remembering Jane's anger at the marriage of Dina and Henry she added, "with Knox one does not by such a proposal fear to draw down the anger and subsequently the vengeance and calumnies of his mother or grandmother indignant at a proposal that might free a victim from their domination."[16]

For some reason Knox did not hasten to pursue this opportunity, and in a year Natalie married a man of her choice, Gustave de Romand. Madame Kaisaroff followed the pattern and protested violently, and Claire, who felt herself to be the omniscient observer of such human foibles, wrote a philosophic comment on it to Mary:

> I suppose all this will seem very astonishing to you, who are quite unaccustomed to such things but you must recollect what a coldness Papa and Mama took to Shelley because he could not resist the love you inspired him with. Because a young Poet fell in love with a beautiful and quite young girl and persuaded her to run away and marry him, such a very natural thing to do, a thing that is done every day these past six thousand years they fell into a most violent state of disapprobation of him. In vain he made you happy in vain he wrote verses that immortalized you and made you the envy and the glory of your sex, nothing would mollify them--they could not work at getting you from him, because he had the good sense by a frank free step to forestall their machinations. So Papa took to being chillingly haughty and stern, and Mama to being lively and furibonde. I know they quite overawed me and though I was a most warm partisan of Shelley and wished to say some impertinences to them, yet I never dared utter one, so much they cowed me. I think when children come to the falling in love age, the Parents ought to be forced to read Shakespear all day long till the children are married. In his works they would see love in full action and in its full nature, what it impells to, and all this represented

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[16] Abinger MSS., 17 August 1844.

> in a way that excites no blame; and so the Parents would accustom their minds to expect their children would do pretty much what Shakespear's heroes and heroines do, and they would not be so furious because their fifteen year old daughter talks like Juliet from a Balcony with her lover, or takes a sleeping draught in order to be buried and when she wakes be married; or that like Rosalind takes man's attire to wander after a youth in a wood and so on. I advised Mad[ame] Kaissaroff to read Shakespear and then she would not feel such horror of Natacha and Gustave, but she would not listen, nor do it.[17]

In the summer of 1843 Mary took a second trip to the Continent with Knox and Percy, and she spent a good deal of the time in Paris. While there she became deeply interested in a little group of Italians--Mazzi, Martini, Guitera, Carlo Romano, and Ferdinand Gatteschi. They were exiled patriots, enthusiastic but impecunious, and Mary did everything in her power to assist them. She borrowed money from Claire to lend to the "Unfortunate" (Gatteschi), and when he wrote her a letter full of misery at his humiliation at being in debt to her, she suggested to Claire that they arrange for some governess to take lessons from him so that Mary could pay the fee, thereby helping Gatteschi without his knowing it.[18] Gatteschi had engaged to help Mary with her travel book by writing for her some account of his experiences in Italy, and this manuscript was finally dispatched, but packed so carelessly that unnecessarily high postal charges had to be paid by Mary.

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[17] Abinger MSS., 4 July 1845.

[18] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 197. A summary of this episode may be found in this work, II, 193-194n.

Claire was much more cautious than Mary in her relations with the glamorous expatriates in the Rue de la Bienfaisance. She observed how rapidly their solicitous attention to her cooled after Mary's departure. But Mary replied that Claire was imagining things; she told Claire how much Guitera admired her and explained that Gatteschi was confined to the house with an ailing foot.[19] When Claire told Mary that she hesitated to serve Gatteschi for fear of a rumor that she was in love with him, Mary laughingly reproved her for wanting to rush out of the house the moment a candle was lighted for fear of being burned alive.[20] For a little while at this time Claire and Mary seemed to exchange positions: Claire became the "conventional slave," sensitive and complaisant to public opinion, whereas Mary flaunted the opinion of society--

> . . . life is too short--& the stream of time carries all too rapidly away for one to care about any of the talk of people --all one can care for is ones own feelings & what one really does and suffers. If I saw any opening for G[atteschi] I would have him over here and serve him all I could--& what would be said about it would be supremely indifferent to me.[21]

The first hint that Claire had, after all, been right came in the summer of 1844, when Lady Sussex, another patroness of

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[19] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 215 and 224-225.

[20] Ibid., II, 202-203.

[21] Ibid., II, 203.

the Italian circle, arrived in London, "half mad poor thing." Mary heard that Guitera had been talking to her about Mary and Claire--

> . . . particularly of me--who am the most committed with regard to what has been done for poor Gatteschi--if he had done so, it is infamous--more so towards his friend than us--but infamous towards both--& did I know he had done so I would entirely cut his acquaintance--I never mentioned these things (I mean things done for G--) in letters to you--because it is useless writing about things of this sort.[22]

Claire informed Mary that Guitera had made Lady Sussex his confidante, and that she had boasted, "Oh! he tells me everything --he is desperately in love with me."[23] Mary could scrape some reassurance from this that at least in Lady Sussex her friends had a wealthy and generous sponsor, but Claire became increasingly sceptical. She saw more and more examples of secrecy and lack of confidence among them, and she withdrew from Lady Sussex so that the latter might enjoy some privacy in her indiscretions. When Gatteschi went to England she begged Mary not to introduce him to the Sanfords, a family in which she had been for a while governess. With a cynicism that had grown from hard experience she wrote:

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[22] *Ibid.*, II, 226.

[23] Abinger MSS., 7 August 1844.

> I who know the world very well, and particularly about masters and young ladies, know perfectly well Gatteschi's beauty will ever be an inseparable impediment to his success as an Italian master. Men hate beauty in a man and women fear it. He will get on I have no doubt but it will be in other ways than lesson giving.[24]

One of the "other ways" was soon to be apparent. Claire's letters through the rest of the year indicate that Gatteschi came almost to the point of marriage with the heiress Natalie Kaisaroff, and Claire implored Mary's discretion in public talk of this and other private matters. Claire was justifiably insulted and hurt when Mary suspected her of having spread the story, which had leaked out to her great embarrassment, of the five hundred francs she had lent to Gatteschi.[25] In December Claire, in a vain attempt to reveal what a frivolous and hypocritical group they had allowed themselves to become attached to, informed Mary that Gatteschi was now Lady Sussex's accepted lover. Mary's reply was another rebuke to Claire for being "a suspicious person." The suspicions were more than justified, unfortunately, for in the autumn of 1845 Mary found herself in the humiliating position of being blackmailed by the person she had so faithfully defended.[26] She realized suddenly that she

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[24] Abinger MSS., 22 August 1844.

[25] Abinger MSS., 20 November 1844.

[26] The story of the blackmail and Mary's attempts to retrieve, with the assistance of Knox, the incriminating letters, may be found in *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, II, 251-282, ([?September, 1845] to 29 December [1845]).

cared very much indeed for "what would be said about it."

Knox acted promptly and firmly. He took the matter out of Mary's hands, attempted to put her mind at ease, bade her open no more of Gatteschi's letters; he engaged to go to Paris and to obtain with the help of the police the letters which she had written with an excess of warmth. For four months she suffered agonies of suspense in which she felt that her fate rested in Knox's hands. The young man acted with great good sense, and at last the mission was accomplished. Mary felt that she could never repay him for his patient and faithful service. "Is not Knox a darling," she wrote in an excess of enthusiasm to Claire. She had not yet learned, even in the hard school she had just attended, and she never did learn the misconstructions that could be put on overly warm and affectionate language.

Alexander Knox apparently merited her confidence. It does not appear that he ever betrayed it. He came from a family which claimed to have sprung from John Knox, and his mother was a daughter of the Reverend Dr. Greenfield who assisted Bishop Percy in editing his _Reliques_. Young Knox considered himself a poet; some of his verses were quoted by Mary in her _Rambles in Germany and Italy_, and he published a volume, _Giotto and Francesca and Other Poems_, in 1842. He had taken an M.A. at Cambridge and had been called to the bar as a member of Lincoln's Inn. In 1844 he had started writing leaders for the _Morning Chronicle_, and when he returned from his commission for Mary he received an offer from the _Times_, with which he stayed

for fifteen years, writing an average of six leaders a week. He left the Times in 1860 to become Metropolitan Police Magistrate, and his death in 1891 concluded a highly successful public career, distinguished by many intimate friendships with men of position.[27] Mary had recognized in the twenty-seven-year-old youth a man worthy of her trust.

Claire remained in Paris while Knox was there, but she saw him infrequently so as to avoid the suspicion of the Italians. When his mission was accomplished he returned to London; shortly thereafter Claire had occasion to follow. She had invested £4000 of her inheritance from Shelley in an opera box at Lumley's Queen's Theatre, and she was anxious to be on hand to oversee the renting of it in person.[28]

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[27] This account is based on Mrs. Andrew Crosse, "Alexander Knox and His Friends," Temple Bar, XCIV (April, 1892) 495-517, and on her article in the D.N.B.

[28] In her extreme old age, Claire blamed Mary for advising her to make this investment, which turned out to be a bad one.--Clairmont MSS., 4 January 1879. But the letters of 1845 reveal that although Mary made the original suggestion that Claire go in with her in the purchase of the box, she later decided that it was a risky investment and withdrew her suggestion. Claire then insisted upon taking the entire box herself and believed that she could get along on the £4000 of Shelley's legacy which would be left after the purchase. She may have been influenced in this decision by the example of her former employer, Mrs. Sanford, who made a tidy profit by renting her box on all but Saturday evenings, at which time she enjoyed it herself. A box seated four and usually rented for £300 per annum. What Claire discovered almost immediately after her purchase was that the heyday of Italian opera was for the time being past. The misguided investment proved an irritation to her to the very last year of her life.

Once in London, Claire decided that she would like to remain there. Mary did not discourage her; her letters to Claire during the Gatteschi imbroglio had been open-hearted and affectionate. Claire had been in the right from the beginning, and Mary could not find words strong enough to express her gratitude and indebtedness. Although, as Mary warned, life in London would undoubtedly be less exciting than in Paris, there was little to hold Claire in France after her promising friendship with the Italian circle had been destroyed, her acquaintance with the Boinvilles and Turners had terminated,[29] and her Russian friends had nearly all departed.

After almost a half century of experience, Claire and Mary had not yet come to realize that any attempt for them to live

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[29] Although she had been delighted with their company when she first went to Paris in 1841, her enthusiasm had cooled rapidly. Her letters reveal a view of the Boinville family somewhat different from that in Thomas Constable, Memoir of the Reverend Charles A. Chastel de Boinville (London, 1880). The family which descended from Shelley's friend, Harriet Collins Boinville, had by the middle of the century taken two directions almost equally antipathetic to Claire--piety and madness. Harriet Lambe, daughter of Shelley's friend, the vegetarian Doctor William Lambe, had married in 1818 Alfred Chastel de Boinville, the son of Shelley's Harriet Boinville. Harriet Lambe Boinville had a daughter Cornelia, named after her aunt, Cornelia Boinville Turner, and at least five sons. A good deal is known of the pious son, Charles (b. 1819), who became a well-known evangelical clergyman in France. Two other sons, Alexander and William, married and lived solid respectable lives. But two other sons, Frank and Oswald, ignored by the family memoir, were lunatics, in and out of asylums throughout Claire's acquaintance with the family. Alexander de Boinville, Claire reported, looked upon all the rest of his family as raving lunatics.--Abinger MSS., 2 June 1843.

near each other was foredoomed to disaster. In this instance, there was trouble immediately, for Mary had jaunted off to Germany without leaving strict orders that her house be kept open for Claire. Miss Clairmont was insulted; Mary apologized. After several delays, however, Claire was finally settled in London, at 26 Osnaburgh Street, Regent's Park.

As it worked out in the years that followed, Mary and Claire saw comparatively little of each other, since Mary left London as frequently as possible and stayed at Brighton. After Percy's marriage in 1848 to Mary's friend and admirer, Mrs. St. John, his mother lived with the young couple at Field Place.[30]

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[30] Mary and Claire both had to adjust their dreams for Percy Florence as the passing years revealed his inability or his lack of ambition to fulfill their lofty but infrequently expressed hopes. Mary's disappointment shows throughout her later letters to Claire. Percy Florence never really cared for Claire, a fact to which she adjusted in time. Actually, Claire's letters to Mary about Percy show an unexpected and very appealing tact. In 1845, when the lad (now twenty-five years old) was making his last abortive attempts at a career, Claire wrote, "Love to dear Percy, the most metaphysical of conveyancers the most poetic and musical lawyer he will make that ever was seen."--Abinger MSS., 20 November 1845. One month later a new project was reflected in a letter to Mary: "Percy will get into Parliament and must try for a place, and all will go well. I shall see him yet Secretary of State and then you can pay your debts. Lady Blessington thought to pay hers by upsetting Louis Phillipe and putting young Napoleon in his place."--Abinger MSS., 17 December 1845. Just one month later a further insight into Percy's dilettantism as contrasted to the dreams of Claire and Mary can be gained from Claire's letter: "Love to dearest Percy--he must not buy any hearth rug for his sitting room for I have worked him one which I bring all ready to lay down. It is worked with roses of all colors except black, and is to be an emblem of his fate, past present and future. I am so glad he is in the millitia--and so glad he is in the law--and now if he goes into Parliament and if he falls in love, and to boot is, as he is, a musician and a metaphysician and a good boater, in a little time

Throughout the autumn of 1848 Mary looked forward to a visit from Claire whenever Field Place should be made ready. Her invitations sound extremely cordial, but there is no evidence that Claire accepted them. In 1849 two of Charles Clairmont's children came to visit their Aunt Claire in England: eighteen-year-old Wilhelm (called Willy) and twenty-three-year-old Clari (variously spelled Clary, Clairy, Cleary, and Clara). Mary invited them all to come to Field Place, but again Claire was reluctant to accept. One reason was financial; the trip was an expensive one. Claire offered as a further excuse her eagerness not to seem to be taking advantage of Mary's generosity:

> My only fear is--that neither you or Percy are able to manage affairs in a way advantageous to yourselves. Your capacities are not in fault--that you well know--but that dislike you both have of looking into a disagreeable subject. And so you are like clay in the hands of those who have an interest in deceiving you. This is one of the reasons why I always say disagreeable things to you and Percy--because I cannot bear that anyone

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he will be a universe of a man comprehending all things."--Abinger MSS., 19 January 1846. Trelawny, in later years, could not conceal his loathing of a son so different from his father. He wrote to Claire for any notes about Percy Shelley and was irritated to receive her reply about the person whom he referred to as "his degenerate son--a bear for beer swilling lout of the very coarsest and commonest order and as to his wife it's a vice to know her no one can accuse her of a single good quality --but capable of everything that's mean--surely I must know enough about them without writing to you about them."--Unpublished passage omitted by Forman in his Trelawny *Letters*, p. 220 and supplied from the MS. by the courtesy of his son, Maurice Buxton Forman. Claire's view of Percy Florence was later modified from the potential Sir Philip Sydney of her letters to Mary to a view closer to Trelawny's but never so extreme. There was never any love lost between Claire and Lady Jane.

> should think that I am paying my court to you and taking advantage of your love of agreeable sensations.[31]

She added to this somewhat unflattering comment that she would like to accept the invitation to Field Place if she could be sure that there would be no other company. She was excessively conscious of the gulf which lay between Sir Percy's aristocratic sphere and the shabby, hard-working world of the Clairmonts. The difference was one she was prone to exploit with a sort of self-righteous inverse snobbishness. She apologized in advance for their unfashionable clothes[32] and was generally apprehensive about the trip:

> I cannot imagine what you want to see these two children for? and I am so afraid of their not pleasing and incurring the criticisms of your super-fine-set. And poor dears, they have to earn their livelihood--and are such well-disposed young people it would be a pity to turn them from the right path and make them miserable for Life; which often happens, when poor people frequent the society of the rich.[33]

It was finally arranged that Claire should bring the two children down on the first of May. "The Shelleys say they will come in May to spend two days with us--I hope not till the end of May," wrote Mary.[34]

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[31] Abinger MSS., 11 April 1849. See Grylls, *Mary Shelley*, pp. 235-236 for a fuller quotation from this letter.

[32] "Claire said I did not know what good dresses your sister had till I came to look in her boxes."--Pauline Clairmont's diary, Clairmont MSS.

[33] Abinger MSS., *loc. cit.*

[34] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, II, 332.

The visit must have been a social success, despite Claire's dubious attitude, for it was apparently prolonged. The children became very much at home at Field Place and got on famously with Percy Florence and his friends. The disaster which Claire had dreaded took just the opposite form to that which she had predicted: Clari stayed on after her brother had left for school; while she was at Field Place, the old friend of Mary and Percy Florence, Alexander Knox, came to visit; after seven days' acquaintance he and Clari walked out quietly one day without telling Claire and got married.

Claire's reaction was insane fury.[35] Her authority had been profoundly snubbed, and she resented bitterly the fact that Mary had known of the plans and had not interfered, although in point of fact, Claire ought to have considered their behavior the natural result of the frivolous life of which she had plainly

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[35] For Claire's extended statement of her point of view in a letter to Tonie Clairmont, see Appendix H.

disapproved.[36] At the very least, she ought to have remembered her sermon to Mary about the natural propensities of young lovers.

Clairmont family opinion was divided over Clari's marriage. Charles and Tonie were naturally not displeased; they had hardly dared hope that their daughter would make so splendid a match. Knox wrote at once to his father-in-law explaining who he was and what he had; he numbered among his assets a respectably distinguished family, a first-rate education, a "permanent engagement" as correspondent to the Times at £720 a year, and heavy life insurance. Only the last item troubled Charles. "He could not have done this for Mrs. S[helley]. Did you ever hear of any other connections?" he asked Claire. On the whole

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[36] A year after the first visit to Field Place Claire wrote to her nephew Willy in a tone quite different from that which she had addressed to Mary in April of 1849: "How different are they [the Pringles] from the cold sharp manners of Mrs. S[helley]--how little do they ever think of taking care of themselves--which she and those who study under her, have only one object in Life, to take care of their own interests. When they do a generous action, it is one that ulteriorly will turn to their own benefit. . . . In Mrs. S[helley]'s House all is confusion--the young dictate--the old grey-haired people go on their knees before 'glorious Boys' and obey without a word--the new married wife feels far deeper interest in her husband's male friend than in her husband himself; the young men who frequent the house run a muck with the young women; if they are married they dance rigadoon with them; if they are unmarried they fetch a Bull and carry off the young lady on its back, spite of the tears and shrieks of Aunts and Mothers, to Warwick Squares and Kensington Gores. Nice melodramatic House, full of fun and frolic, like Donnybrook Fair, and about as distingué!" --Clairmont MSS., 10 March 1850.

he was willing to subdue any misgivings, and he sent his daughter his blessing and ₤50 for wedding clothes.[37]

Despite a lack of cooperation from Tonie and Charles, Claire persisted in her merciless attack on the young people, and her wounded pride succeeded in whipping up a family and inter-family feud of formidable proportions. She attacked Tonie for shamelessness and rained invective upon the whole tribe of the Shelleys and their friends.

If she could not entirely succeed in turning her brother and his wife against their daughter, she could at least gain support from Willy, who had seen the light-headed frivolity at Field Place. But Willy, although he came eventually to see Claire's side of the dispute, was slow to judge, and perhaps the most objective view of the entire distasteful business is to be found in his letters. On 12 June he wrote to Claire to tell her that he could not be expected to take sides until he had heard more of the facts.[38] On 3 July he wrote to his parents:

> It cannot be denied that A[unt] C[laire] is of an extremely imperious and despotic disposition, this frequently gives rise to little disputes the worst of which is that A[unt] C[laire] sees everywhere some secret plot or intention, and if you give your real cause she only says that you are much to [sic] young to deceive her. . . . I don't think, I confess, A[unt] C[laire] has behaved very well on one point and that is that she makes the busiest job of running about among all her acquaintance, even those that have been quite laid by and tells them all the whole affair in the least favourable light; even to quite common people as the old woman whom I lived with.[39]

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[37] Clairmont MSS., n. d.

[38] Clairmont MSS.

[39] Ibid.

Quite understandably, Willy asked that this letter be kept secret from his aunt; but on 1 August he wrote that he had decided that Claire was more in the right than Clari; and on 16 and 17 August he was busily attempting to explain Claire's point of view to his family. It is clear that he had at that point accepted as fact Claire's contention that Clari had accepted as husband one of Mary's cast-off flames:

> Mr. K[nox] of course is furious against my aunt for speaking so openly all she knew about him; now A[unt] C[laire] says she is determined to make the Shel[leys] pay the piper for it. A[unt] C[laire] says you ask why she never complained of the S[helleys] before; and she said that she never mentioned particulars about them, but always complained bitterly of them to you at Paris; and told you there that Mr. Trelawny had told her many years before that Mrs. S[helley] was the bitterest enemy she ever had.[40]

The passage of many years eventually mellowed Claire's vindictiveness somewhat, but Charles Clairmont died with the bitterness of it in his mouth; his death in 1850 left Tonie with seven children and a family feud on her hands. Then on 1 February 1851, Mary Shelley died without a reconciliation with her companion of forty-seven years. The paranoic spasm which parted them at last was the logical but heart-breaking conclusion of those long years of incompatibility. The bonds which had held them together were strong, but not strong enough.[41]

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[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Maud Rolleston, who knew Lady Shelley in 1894 and thereafter, has left the most familiar account of the relationship between Mary and Claire in the last years of Mary's life. See her *Talks with Lady Shelley* (London, 1925). Her account is discussed in detail in Appendix H.

After Mary's death Claire stayed on in England for some years. She did not allow her feud with Tonie and Clari to prevent her from taking a serious interest in the education of her nieces and nephews, and she assisted them with unfailing generosity. Willy received English training in agricultural methods at the Greenwich Agricultural College at Stockbridge, and he was soon joined in England by his oldest sister Pauline. According to her father's description in 1845, when the girl was twenty she was a remarkably interesting and attractive person:

> A very pretty face, brown hair, dark eyes, neat, pretty round little figure 5 feet 2 inches high, English measure. She is a sweet good tempered girl, with an excellent understanding, but no inclination for literature; but to make up for this she speaks English, French and German almost equally well, and is besides, even here in Vienna (the very hot-bed of instrumental music) quite a proficient on the Piano. She is considered one of the best female dilettanti in our capital, and there is no doubt that in case of necessity she could earn her livelihood by it. She is consequently Beethoven mad.[42]

In December, 1852, the two young people took Knox's suggestion and set off for Australia, where Willy was to try out the agricultural methods which he had been studying at Greenwood, and Pauline was to be a governess. When they returned in August, 1857, they alone of all their brothers and sisters were left alive. Clari Knox died in 1855, apparently of tuberculosis.[43] Then in 1856 three more succumbed in Vienna: Sidonie,

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[42] Abinger MSS., 23 November 1845.

[43] Clari is not mentioned in any account of her husband's life that I have seen. Shortly after her death Knox married Susan Armstrong.

at nineteen, who had since early childhood been crippled with scrofula; Charles, at twenty-four, who had tried to regain his health by a futile trip to Scotland in 1854; and Emily, at twenty-three. The next year brought down Hermine, in her twenty-third year. Their mother Tonie, wearied out by years of nursing and the hopeless fight against the foe which had been held at bay for so long, but which had crushed her children at last, turned for comfort to Claire. Old differences were forgotten, and they became fast friends in adversity. Perhaps Claire came eventually to understand why Tonie had defended the marriage of her daughter Clari by begging that the child be allowed to enjoy her sunlight while she had it.[44]

Pauline Clairmont concentrated into her small body all the vivacity and physical health and mental exuberance that had been lost in her sisters and brother. By 1855 she had filled seven volumes entitled Tagebuch or Book of Life, which ran to sixteen closely-written volumes by 1880. Seven of these journals give a vivid, if somewhat biased, picture of Claire Clairmont's last years, as well as a remarkably detailed portrait of Pauline herself.[45] Pauline, or "Plin" as she was known to her family, was an emancipated woman--freedom-loving, realistic, high-spirited, and somewhat over-sexed. Her journals

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[44] Clairmont MSS., 24 September 1850.

[45] The following account, except as otherwise stated, is based on these journals, which are in the Clairmont MSS.

Pauline Clairmont

reveal with an unembarrassed gusto, rather unexpected in a young lady of the age of Victoria, her intimate adventures with one man after another. Except as far as her nieces and nephews were concerned, she was utterly self-centered, and took her pleasures--which included cigarettes, laudanum, and alcohol--where she found them. She was neither fastidious nor scrupulous; her diary records no flicker of conscience or remorse, or even of fatigue. One day of her energetic life would have sufficed to kill the sensitive heroines of the sentimental novels of her day, but Flin had been created for the pages of the lusty historical novels of the next century.[46] She gloated over her knowledge of what most women missed, and from time to time, when in financial distress, she seriously considered taking to the streets: "au fond je suis née pour être courtisane mais non levée a ce metier."[47]

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[46] Ironically enough, Flin's first appearance as a character in a novel was the retiring spinster Tina in *The Aspern Papers*. Although the plot of the book was a reasonably close reproduction of the situation in Claire's household just before her death, the personality of Tina was radically different from that of her prototype, Pauline.

[47] One cannot possibly overemphasize the difference between Pauline as she revealed herself in her journal and in her intimate relationship with Claire and the quite different picture she presented to the younger members of her family. As Willy's children grew up they were told nothing about the colorful careers of their great aunt Claire or their aunt Flin. Dr. Walter Clairmont writes of Flin's diaries, which he inherited after the death of his sister Alma in 1946: "I looked them through superficially but did not care much about them, and since, as boy, I have liked her and admired her intensely I checked the perusal of her diaries very soon lest in my old days my youthful ideal should not get lowered. . . . Aunt Flin certainly was a

In 1859, after a visit to Claire in Croydon, Pauline set out for Rakicsan in the heart of Hungary where she was employed as governess to the five children of a Countess Julia. At the end of that year Claire, now sixty-one, moved to Italy. From that time on, Florence was her permanent home. Pauline, who did not enjoy the restrictions of a governess's life any more than her aunt had before her, left Hungary at the beginning of 1860 and spent the months from January to April with Claire.

In 1863 Pauline resigned herself to the fact that she was going to have a baby, but she was not deeply disturbed, except insofar as she became for a while a burden to her beloved brother Willy, who was then farming at Boban in Austria. She stayed with him until the baby was nearly due, then left him on 3 January, travelled into Hungary, had her baby on 21 January, and walked melodramatically through a snowstorm a week later to offer the child to the Countess Amelie Karoly. The Countess welcomed the baby, a little girl, into her household, and by the end of March Flin was back at her old pastime of making wives jealous. Despite this apparent lack of maternal feeling, Flin shows in her journal that she never ceased to be delighted with the thought of her child, to whom she was, in idea at least, deeply attached, and she never succeeded in keeping her wonderful secret very long from a person close to her.

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splendid linguist. She taught me English and French. She also spoke fluently Italian and what I liked best in her hated Bismark and Cavour."

In 1868 she became a little concerned about her way of life. She did not attempt to deceive herself that her idleness, drinking, smoking, and seeking the company of low men were anything but dissipation. In that year her mother died, and Pauline was at the end affectionately reconciled to her after many years of petty quarrels. Flin seemed to realize that her only claim to self-respect, her only redemption from self-indulgence, was in her loyalty to her brother's family. She rejoiced when baby Walter was born to Willy and his excellent wife Ottilie:

> . . . one of the finest babies I have ever seen, with all the Clairmont fire in it, Willy's elegant hands & lovely mouth & dark hair--& his mother's blue eyes--sweet darling may it grow up & make us all happy--& be as his father, the kindest most generous most just, most considerate & unselfish man I have ever known.[48]

Two years later, in 1870, Flin moved to Florence as a paying guest in Claire's menage. She stayed on in this capacity until 1877, when she became a housekeeper without pay. In their

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[48] Walter Clairmont did indeed grow up to be a kind and generous man. Despite a fall from a tree when he was sixteen which made him a partial cripple for life, Geheimrat Clairmont became a distinguished resident of Munich, where he passed his life, still remaining a British subject like his father and grandfather before him. He was for many years president of the Bavarian Industriellenverband and holds an honorary degree from the University of Munich. Throughout the war he remained relatively unmolested by virtue of his being a British subject and a man of advanced years, but he opposed the Nazi regime. When I visited him in 1949 he was a keen and active old gentleman, gracious in placing his papers at my disposal and willing to bring his unclouded memory and his keen sense of humor to bear on the history of his tempestuous family.

brief encounters before, the two women had got on extremely well together. Life with Claire had come to mean a life of freedom in Flin's mind, but almost immediately after she had settled with Claire the inevitable conflicts came to the fore. Both women had firmly settled ideas which they insisted on practicing. Claire, moreover, assumed that what was good for her was naturally good for Flin. She lectured her niece that cold baths and strenuous exercise were bad for her; she vetoed Flin's project to marry a rather unsavory young man named Pasquale. As the extent of her niece's unconventionality was slowly revealed to her, she could not resist the impulse to reproach. Fifty years before she had seen her own youthful romanticism and flaunting of convention turn to dust and ashes. The remainder of her life had been a long cold retreat into respectability. It was incomprehensible to her that Flin should still enjoy at forty-five the gleam which she had discovered long ago to be fool's gold. Their years together were scarred by an ever-increasing mutual antipathy. Flin's journal reveals a sordid history of unavoidably conflicting interests and willfully inflicted pain as the two women grew older together.

One thing they held in common; one emotion they felt with equal strength: they adored their children. The memory of Allegra never dimmed in Claire's mind. In her old age she imagined that the baby might not have died after all, but might be alive still in some convent. Only Trelawny's even more vivid

(and much more realistic) imagination checked this fancy.[49] Then one day Plin told Claire that she too had a little girl:

> She received the news with some show of feeling & what ever the motive may have been she said--You will bring the child here, & I will adopt her. I remember day and place as well as possible when she said these words I felt as if a sudden spring had been touched in my soul & a powerful voice in me cried--No--No--I said nothing & it was only some time afterwards that she found out my quiet but firm resistance.[50]

Despite Plin's resistance the child was sent for and arrived from Hungary on 16 June 1871. Although Plin had made at least eight visits to see her at the Countess Karoly's, she was heartbroken when she saw the child in Florence, speaking vulgar German with a Hungarian accent, interested only in clothes and jewelry, a vain little snob, "in short not what any child of mine & free America ought to be." Plin had dreamed that she would be a lovely wild gipsy creature, a re-creation of her own picture of herself. But poor little Georgina was rather dull.

The anticipated contest for the child's affections was not long delayed. After a weary wait over many decades, Claire had at last found a substitute for her lost daughter, and she used every appeal she knew to draw the child to her. When the Countess Karoly came and proposed putting Georgie in school, Claire bluntly forbade it. Plin was glad to keep the girl with her, but she resented Claire's triumph:

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[49] Letters, pp. 222-223.

[50] Clairmont MSS.

> Poor little thing--her happiness of hope was short--for she can't bear being here--Aunt would not--she wants the child as a toy in the house & would not let her go--therefore poor little Anna[51] for the present has to be sacrificed--but next year I will be firm.

But the next year was the same, and in the end Claire had her way, for in her own mind she had adopted the child. As long as Claire was alive Plin had to continue the fight. She took Claire's possessive attitude towards Georgina as personal malice:

> I am the one on whom Aunt concentrates all her hatred--& strange to say--the very instrument she hoped to torture me with--à la Byron--escapes her--because the good little thing loves me--& obeys me for every feeling & sentiment & idea.

Visitors to the house wondered that Claire should make such a fuss over a strange child. Claire even brought herself to the point of offering her precious letters for sale if thereby she could raise money for Georgina's education.[52] When Claire died, Georgina Maughini was made her chief heir.[53]

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[51] The child is variously referred to in Pauline's journals as Dot, Jane, Anne, Anna, Johanna, Iana, Georgina, and Georgie.

[52] In a letter to Bartolomeo Cini, 11 August 1876, Claire said, "For myself I would not sell my letters--but to benefit Georgie," and in another passage, "I want so much to give a tolerable education to dear Georgina."--MSS. in the possession of the Farina-Cini family, partially published in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 237.

[53] For a copy of Claire's will and a discussion of its execution see Appendix I.

In the years between 1860, when she first moved to Florence, and her death in 1879, Claire was visited by a good many friends, relatives, and admirers of Shelley. In addition, she kept up her family correspondence and reopened her old acquaintance with Trelawny. With the help of these sources the scholar can to some extent round out the picture sketched in Flin's diary. In 1869 Claire's nephew Willy paid her a visit in her interesting apartment in the Palazzo Orsini, at Via Valfonda 33, in the same street where she had lived exactly fifty years before, with Shelley and Mary in the house of Madame Du Plantis. Willy wrote to his family an account of her, defying the notorious Florentine winter with her small circle of friends:

> Claire has hardly altered at all since I saw her last; she looks well and is well . . . [she] lives in the Palace Orsini of which she has hired *einen hinteren Trakt*--a narrow winding staircase leads up to it from a small courtyard and out into the garden. All the doors to and from it are concealed--*so wie Tapetentüren*. It evidently was in olden times a secret entrance to the palace, for admission partly of servants, but also I think of the lovers of the ladies.--My room is what is generally the drawing room. It is large and with a nice view over the garden and part of the town--but the rooms are wretchedly cold. I always wear my coat --*wenn auch ein Feuer im Kamin ist, bleibt es doch so kalt, dass man immer den Rauch siet*. There is a housekeeper and two young ladies with Aunt Claire. One is Miss Miller, a German, who was with Mr. and Mrs. Pulsky, and one English lady, Miss Moulson. This latter is young, and good-looking and very coquette, but not in a designing way, quite innocently.[54]

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[54] Huscher, *op. cit.*, p. 102. This letter was not found among the other Clairmont MSS. which were sent from Vienna to Dr. Walter Clairmont. It must either have been lost in the bomb damage to Frau Alma Cruwell-Clairmont's flat or have been among the valuables sent by her to the country during the war.

Miss May Moulson one knows only from a series of small catty remarks in Flin's journal, but Miss Miller (or Müller) later came to know Richard Garnett and talked to him about her association with Claire:

> She gives a very favorable account of Claire in general; though she suspects her of romanticising and suppressing facts. She had the remains of great beauty, and must have been a deep brunette. She used to speak of Shelley with affection, but accused him of instability; she never, or rarely, mentioned Byron. Miss Muller felt sure that her love affair with the latter was the only one she had.[55]

A fleeting impression of Claire at this period comes from the American painter John Singer Sargent, who was at this time a boy of thirteen, living in the Via Solferino and taking lessons at a day-school. He attended dancing lessons that winter, too, he told his biographer, and--

> . . . on one occasion the usual pianist was unable to attend, and the class was on the point of being dissolved when it was remembered that someone who played and might be willing to fill the vacancy lived on the floor above. Presently a handsome old lady dressed in black silk came into the room. He noted a faded elegance about her as she took her place at the piano. The lady was Jane Clairmont, now seventy-two years of age.[56]

In April of the next year, 1870, Claire received as a visitor her nephew Willy's sister-in-law, the young and charming

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[55] Richard S. Garnett, editor, *Letters about Shelley Interchanged by Three Friends--Edward Dowden, Richard Garnett and Wm. Michael Rossetti* (London, 1917), pp. 142-143. Miss Muller's report is in a letter from Garnett to Rossetti dated 3 August 1885.

[56] Evan Charteris, *John Sargent* (New York, 1927), p. 13.

Caroline Pichler, called Alma. Alma was delighted with Claire, "eine kleine, distinguierte, echt englische Dame mit weissen Locken." She wrote home a pleasant account of her neat and pretty apartment, of the good table she set, of the elegant Miss Moulson with her long blonde curls, and of the musical evening at which Alma sang the Mozart, Schubert, and Handel songs which Claire still loved.[57] Alma's happiness as it shows in this letter was shallow and shortlived. On 23 May, less than three weeks after she had been enjoying her visit with Claire, Alma Pichler drowned herself. What happened on her return to Austria to precipitate this catastrophe can only be guessed.

In 1871 Claire tried the experiment of moving to Austria to be nearer her beloved family, and in the spring of that year she even went so far as to invest some of her legacy from Shelley in ein *Gut Nikolaihof* between Marburg and Pettau. But the climate proved intolerable, and she gave up the notion of farming and moved back to Florence where her rheumatism did not afflict her so acutely.[58]

In the summer of 1869 Claire reopened her correspondence with Trelawny to ask him again about his recollections of Byron's attitude toward Allegra. For six years they carried on an active interchange of letters. Trelawny's are to be found with his published correspondence; they are full of attempts to quiet

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[57] Huscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-104. This letter also has been lost.

[58] Huscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

the bees in her bonnet, her "restless mind tormenting itself with suspicion and ill omens."[59] When he discovered that the remains of her legacy returned only £120 a year, he offered her £50 for her Shelley letters and relics, but they were unable to reach an agreement.[60] Claire at this time sent to Trelawny great numbers of letters and reminiscences, most of which he merely thumbed through and did not read. He objected to the disconnected fragments and hoped that she would take the trouble to compose a connected narrative while she still had time.[61]

In 1873 Trelawny asked his friend William Michael Rossetti, who was starting out on a trip to Italy, to visit Claire and to ascertain just how many documents she had, what they were, and how much she wanted for them. Trelawny, concerned by the violence of Claire's hatred of Byron, even after so many years, asked him to look out particularly for any papers which Claire might intend to use to blacken Byron's name. On 14 and 15 June, despite a recent bad fall, Claire received him at her old apartment in the Via Valfonda. Although Rossetti was never able to find the notes which he made on their conversation, he remembered

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[59] *Letters*, p. 246 and *passim*.

[60] William Michael Rossetti, "Talks with Trelawny," *The Athenæum*, No. 2855 (5 August 1882), p. 177. See also Appendix I.

[61] Claire's letters to Trelawny have been examined by Dowden and Miss Grylls. They are largely unpublished and are probably still in the possession of Maurice Buxton Forman. As I have attempted to illustrate throughout this study, the available evidence indicates that the letters are too unreliable in content to be of primary value to the biographer or the student of Claire and her acquaintance.

enough to leave a pleasant sketch of the little family, with Pauline in attendance and Georgina, "a relative of hers, a prepossessing little girl aged ten or eleven." Claire, who was then seventy-five, he described as--

> . . . a slender and pallid old lady, with thinned hair which had once been dark, and with dark and still expressive eyes: she was, according to her own statement, more than moderately deaf. Her face was such as one could easily suppose her to have been handsome and charming in youth--her voice was clear, even-toned, and agreeable.[62]

She spoke freely and affectionately of Shelley and expressed a high regard for Trelawny's friendliness, but so far as he recalled she did not discuss Byron at all.

The person after Flin best qualified to described Claire and her household during her last years neglected, so far as is known, to write his impressions. He was the Massachusetts sea-captain, Edward A. Silsbee. Flin recorded his first visits in October, 1872, and expressed her indignation that he paid all his attention to Claire. He stayed around almost as a member of the family until his return to the United States in 1876, and Flin never ceased finding him irresistible. But Silsbee was "Shelley-mad," and it was Claire and her Shelley memories and mementos in which he was interested. Claire, always eager for

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[62] Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti (London, 1906), II, 351-353. Rossetti was the person in the best position to protest the innacurate and sentimental view of Claire in William Graham's Last Links with Byron, Shelley, and Keats. He does so in this volume, II, 354-355.

attention, welcomed his enthusiastic curiosity; as Flin wrote, "Mr. Silsbee is with Aunt & she is quite happy & delighted I am not there to watch her funny ways with men--when she plays the Gurli, or the imbecile, which she does to perfection."[63]

Flin and Claire were not alone in their admiration for Silsbee. George Woodberry has left an account of the old sailor, reciting Shelley on the New England coast or fondling with an almost religious devotion the Shelley notebook which he had obtained from Claire.[64] Edward Garnett described him as a most remarkable person--

> . . . such an one as Trelawny might have been if Trelawny would have been made amiable and gracious without parting with any of his native force. He had travelled far and thought much. A grizzled, weather-beaten veteran of fine physique, his discourse was mainly of poetry and art, on both of which he could utter deeper sayings than are often to be found in print. He was the most enthusiastic critic of Shelley the present writer has known, but also the most acute and discriminating.[65]

The comparison with Trelawny was irresistible. Indeed, there is a possibility that Silsbee came to Claire from Trelawny, having sued unsuccessfully for the hand of Trelawny's daughter.[66]

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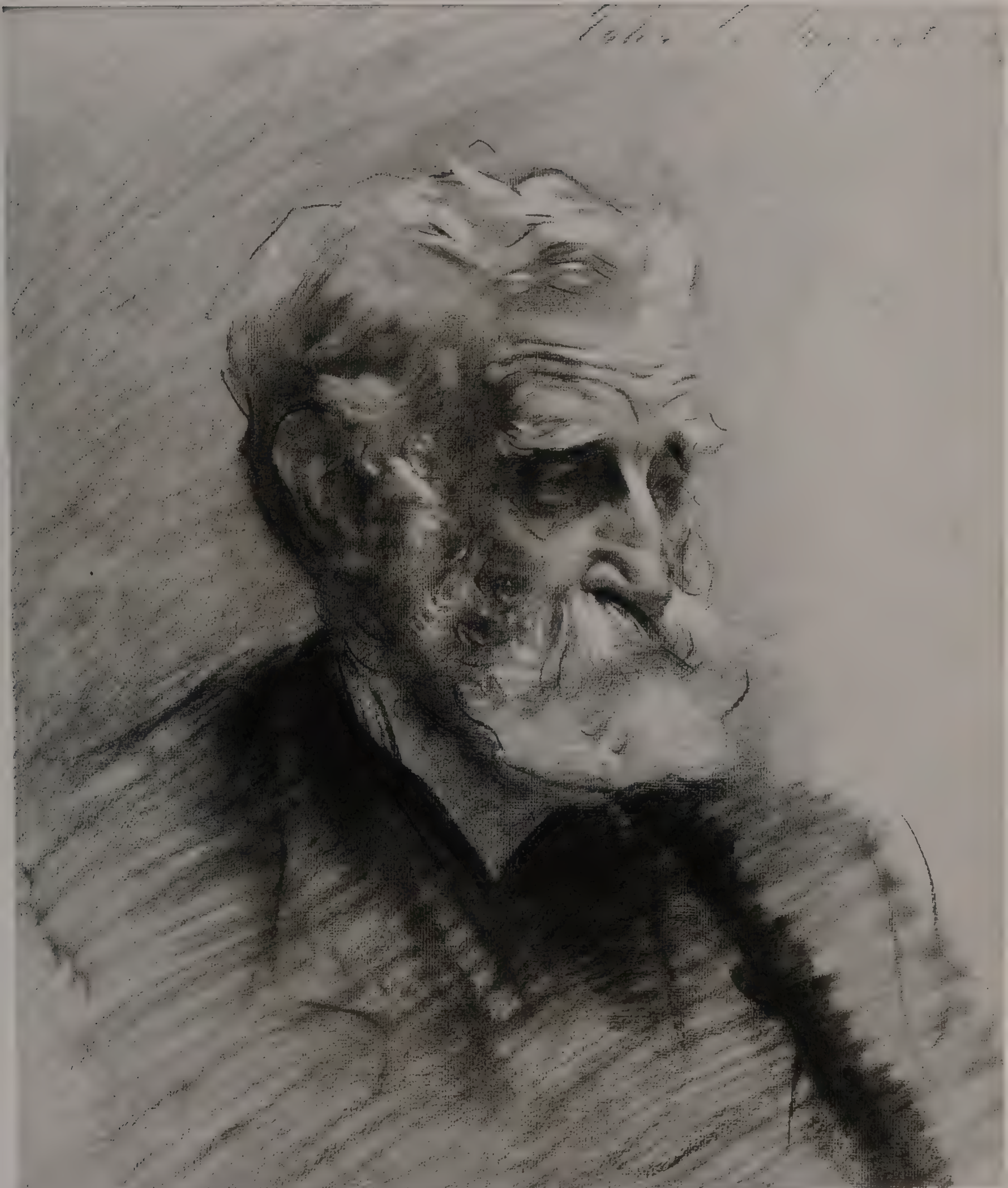
[63] Clairmont MSS., 27 February ?1873 .

[64] The Shelley Notebook in the Harvard College Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 20-21.

[65] Journal of Edward Ellerker Williams: Companion of Shelley and Byron in 1821 and 1822 (London, 1902), Introduction, p. 11n. See also the account of Silsbee in William Michael Rossetti's Reminiscences, II, 511-513.

[66] Muscher, op. cit., p. 104, probably based on evidence in Flin's journal as quoted below.

Edward Augustus Silsbee



EDWARD AUGUSTUS SILSBEE.

b. 1826. d. 1900

whether he was sent to Claire by one of his English acquaintance or whether he was drawn to her by his idolatry of Shelley and Shelley relics cannot be told, but to Florence he did come and made a lasting impression on many there. ~~John~~ Sargent loved his buccaneering tales, particularly the one about the time when Silsbee, while captain of a steamer, fell into an oil tank and was left in it so long that his hair refused ever to curl again.[67] Vernon Lee related that he would "come and sit gloomily in an armchair, looking like some deep-sea monster on a Bernini fountain, staring at the carpet and quoting his favorite author with a trumpet-like twang quite without relevance to the conversation."[68] It was well-known in English and American circles that it was in the hope that the aged possessor of the Shelley manuscripts would die while he was there that he took up residence in the very house with her, at Via Romana 43. It was even rumored that the eager Silsbee never ventured very far from the house lest she die in his absence.[69] He had, indeed, obtained one of the prizes of her collection, the Shelley notebook now in the Harvard library, before he parted from her to return home in 1876, but it had merely whetted his appetite for the remainder of the spoils.

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[67] Charteris, op. cit., p. 14.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

Predatory or not, Silsbee was welcome in Claire's house. He became more and more a member of the family, reading Shelley's poems aloud, or rather reciting them, talking of literature and art, amusing and deligating the two women for hour after hour. Flin was not the kind of woman, however, to support a purely intellectual acquaintance for long. She became more and more attached to Silsbee, and more and more resentful of the time he spent with other women. She accused him of flirting with every female in Florence. She even begrudged him the time he spent with Claire. With an unconscious irony she wrote in her journal of 18 July 1875:

> I cannot help wondering at the longevity of Envy & Jealousy in the human heart--There is Aunt at 77 so jealous that no man dare come into the house but what must be exclusively occupied with her--This morning Mr. Silsbee came at 11½ she talked with him till dinner time as soon as that was over she talked again till 4.

Flin finally made up her mind that she had found the ideal husband for whom she had waited for so many years. Silsbee, unfortunately for her, had no intention of going so far to obtain his precious papers, and he made it clear to her that marriage was out of the question. "It is true he is of a cold nation--Saxon, Anglo-American puritan become unitarian--what human love can there be left," Flin mused after her rejection, but she continued to be torn between her usual analytical realism and an almost ecstatic affection:

> He is sometimes so charming so tender so charitable Christlike that one would like Magdalen sink down at his feet--& admire him like a spirit soaring high above human imperfection--& at other times so commonplace so ordinary not to say vulgar, so spiteful, that I don't wonder at Miss Trelawney's [*sic*] behavior to him.

At last Flin again compromised and accepted Silsbee as her lover, and when he left for America she mourned for him as for a lost husband.[70]

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[70] For a discussion of Silsbee's relationship with Flin after the death of Claire, see the discussion of the execution of Claire's will in Appendix I. The abortive romance furnished the basic situation which Henry James developed in *The Aspern Papers*. In his notebook for 12 January 1887 he noted: "Hamilton (V.L's brother) told me a curious thing of Capt. Silsbee--the Boston art-critic and Shelley-worshipper; that is of a curious adventure of his. Miss Claremont, Byron's *ci-devant* mistress (the mother of Allegra) was living, until lately, here in Florence, at a great age, 80 or thereabouts, and with her lived her niece, a younger Miss Claremont--of about 50. Silsbee knew that they had interesting papers--letters of Shelley's and Byron's--he had known it for a long time and cherished the idea of getting hold of them. To this end he laid the plan of going to lodge with the Misses Claremont--hoping that the old lady in view of her great age and failing condition would die while he was there, so that he might then put his hand upon the documents, which she hugged close in life. He carried out this scheme--and things *se passèrent* as he expected. The old woman *did* die--and then he approached the younger one--the old maid of 50--on the subject of his desires. Her answer was--'I will give you all the letters if you marry me!' H. says that Silsbee *court encore*." --*The Notebooks of Henry James*, pp. 71-72. It is difficult to tell how much this story had been distorted by the eight years between Claire's death and the time that James heard it. Certainly Claire did not die while he was in Italy, but he did return immediately at the news of her death in an attempt to buy the letters on credit. It is probable that Flin's statement in her journal (31 July 1879), "he wrote to say he could not give the price that I asked for the letters--& begged to withdraw from the contest," can be taken at its face value. Another account of the affair, apparently from the same source, Vernon Lee's half-brother Eugene Lee-Hamilton, is found in Charteris, *op. cit.* p. 15: "The niece, mature in years and gifted with few

Early in 1879, in the last letter she was ever to write, Claire told her nephew Willy of her acute financial distress: "Mr. Silsbee helped us almost thro' last year--one cannot expect we [sic for he] shall do so this year."[71] Claire, however, did not have much longer to trouble herself with the things of this world, for on 19 March she died in her sleep. Plin had forgotten all her bitter quarrels with her mother, Tonie, at the time of her death, and she was prepared to lay aside her differences with Claire:

> This morning poor Aunt died at about 10--calmly without agony without consciousness--as she had predicted herself--she went out like candle snuff--As I closed her eyes I thought to myself that I pardoned her all the mischief the trouble the grief she had caused me from my heart--I bear her no rancour--except that

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of the graces which appeal to buccaneers, had long nourished a secret flame for the Captain. She declared her passion and proposed a bargain; the manuscripts should be the Captain's, but he must take her in marriage as a term of the deal. The Captain refused to pay the price; he left the Via Romana and the manuscripts and fled from Florence. This story was told to Henry James, and within a few weeks he produced 'The Aspern Papers.' The hero, it will be remembered, evaded the offer in a state of the deepest embarrassment and merely expressed profound annoyance at losing the manuscripts." There is no doubt that the situation in The Aspern Papers is more founded on fact than has heretofore been recognized. It is important, nevertheless, to bear in mind the statement of James in his preface to the novel that he is working from the Silsbee "legend," not fact, and that the novelist, unlike the historian, who wants more documents than he can use, wants instead more liberties than he can take. James was less interested in the story per se than in the opportunities which it inevitably presented for the imaginative romantic reconstruction of the days of Shelley and Byron as counterpointed against the modern Americanism of Silsbee and, actually, of James himself.

[71] Clairmont MSS., 2 and 3 January 1879.

she tried to make poor G. as unhappy as she could. But it is past--let the dead rest in peace if they can.

Let there be Peace.

She was buried as she desired with Shelley's little shawl at the Cimetry [sic] of the Antella.[72]

The idea of death had never been far below the surface of Claire's letters and journals. In her youth she had boldly welcomed it, and if for a while in her old age she had learned the ancient fear, she had nevertheless come at the end to welcome the low mist in peace. Perhaps the many hours which Silsbee had spent in reading to her from Shelley's poems had served to remind her of what she had always believed:

> Die,
> If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
> Follow where all is fled!

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[72] Clairmont MSS., 19 March 1879.

Chapter II

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT: CHARACTER AND CHARACTERISTICS

Claire's intellectual and spiritual biography falls rather easily into three parts, which have been called, with as much wisdom as wit, the illusion, the disillusion, and the dissolution. The enthusiastic school-girl who accompanied Mary and Shelley in 1814 on their elopement to the Continent amused them with her starry-eyed admiration of each successive scene. She filled her journal with exclamation points and with such adjectives "divine," "delightful," "exquisitely beautiful," "sweet," "terrific," and "sublime." It was Byron's consistent coldness which eventually forced her to lay aside her rose-colored glasses. The first hint of sincere bitterness is found in a letter to him of 15 May 1819, in which she wrote, "I have said nothing definitely because I know what a very unnatural thing you would think it, that I should interfere

with my own child."[1] By February of the following year she was recording regularly in her journal her "Hints for Don Juan," a series of bitterly critical and almost entirely humorless comments on Byron's character.[2] Together with her disillusionment in Byron came an intense personal unhappiness akin to despair. On 27 April 1821 she wrote, "Because it is my Birthday I amuse myself lest the day should appear too odious."[3] She left Italy in 1822 under a pall of the bitterness and gloom. Shelley's stanzas printed with "Alastor" seem unconsciously to have prophesied her fate:

Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
  And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.
The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around thine head,
  The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy feet:
But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds the dead,
  Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and peace may meet.

In entering upon the career of a governess, Claire needed all of the high spirits and sense of humor which were native to her. She herself was well aware of the disintegration which such a life brought about:

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[1] Murray MSS., quoted in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 241.

[2] Ashley MSS. See discussion of the "Hints" in Chapter III.

[3] Ashley MSS.

> . . . nothing can be more dismal that [sic] to think all the best years of my life are being sacrificed here and that my independence will only be given when servitude shall have debased my mind and long suffering deadened every sensibility and thus render me unfit for enjoying it. I struggle as hard as I can against the inroads of deterioration but I feel already as if I had grown a vile common creature . . . Nothing can exceed the hatred I have for Mankind--the human kind have become an object of abhorrence to me.[4]

This is of course an exaggerated statement, made when Claire was still only twenty-eight, but the debilitating attrition continued year after year.

There is now enough material available in Claire's journals and letters to answer some of the questions about her character and personality which have long puzzled scholars. How consistent was she in her opinions and her attitudes toward people? How well-balanced was she temperamentally? Was she ever actually insane? What became of her youthful romantic disposition as she grew older? What was it like to have lived with her or to have been her friend or relation? An understanding of these problems requires a familiarity with the pattern of Claire's whole life; the answer to each question casts some light upon the young woman who was the mistress of Byron and the friend of Shelley.

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[4] Abinger MSS., 2[o.s.], 14 [n.s.] May 1826 .

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Throughout her life, Claire, a true child of the Godwin household, supported an assortment of beliefs and theories. At one time or another she made clear her position on such subjects as children's education, perfectibility, health and diet, and politics. Typical of these but more consistently recurring are her religious convictions and her theories about the position of women in society.

It has been suggested that Claire was a more ardent feminist than Mary Wollstonecraft's own daughter. Certainly from an early age Claire showed how profoundly she had been influenced by A Vindication of the Rights of Women, as well as by the posthumous works of Mary Wollstonecraft and by the even more extreme views of William Godwin.

In A Vindication of the Rights of Women there is no protest against the institution of marriage; instead, Mary Wollstonecraft expressed her horror at a social system in which the laws and customs operated entirely to the benefit of the men and to the humbling and crushing of women. She agitated for a greater equality of rights and privileges for the two sexes through legislation and a gradual alteration of the attitude of society as a whole. She hoped to show that women were not congenitally inferior in intellect and imagination to men. Her militant feminism, which found its logical exponents eventually in Emmeline Pankhurst and her suffragettes, is reflected in one of Claire's letters to Byron,

written on 12 January 1818:

> I am delighted [with Frankenstein], and whatever private feelings of envy I may have at not being able to do so well myself, yet all yields when I consider that she is a woman and will prove in time an ornament to us and an argument in our favour. How I delight in a lovely woman of strong and cultivated intellect; how I delight to hear all the intricacies of life and argument, hanging on her lips. If she were my mortal enemy, if she had even injured my darling, I would serve her with fidelity and fervently advocate her as doing good to the whole. When I read of Epicharsis the slave in Tacitus and of Hypatia in Gibbon, I shriek with joy and cry, "Vittoria! Vittoria!" I cannot bear that women should be outdone in virtue and knowledge by men.[5]

Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman deplored the conventions of society which debased women and then penalized them for their baseness: "By allowing women but one way of rising in the world, the fostering of the libertinism of men, society makes monsters of them, and then their ignoble vices are brought forward as a proof of inferiority of intellect."[6] By the time she was sixteen, Claire was prompt to pick instances of this from her reading; she called Rousseau's Sophie (in Émile) the most finished of coquettes:

> Emile is astonished at her infidelity--"he is sure that as Sophie has proved weak there can be no truth in Woman." It is indeed partial to judge the whole set by the conduct of

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[5] Murray MSS., quoted in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 233. It took Claire some little while to discover how peculiarly offensive this particular shriek was to Byron's ears.

[6] Posthumous Works of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women, edited by William Godwin (London, 1798), I, 176.

> one whose very education tended to fit her more for a Seraglio than the friend & equal of Man.[7]

The whole of Mary Wollstonecraft's Wrongs of Women is a series of case histories illustrating the evils of marriage, but Claire did not have to go so far back to imbibe the fervor of this theory, since William Godwin was one of its strongest proponents. It was from Godwin that Shelley received his enthusiasm for the idea, apparently before he had read Mary Wollstonecraft's works. In one of her earliest letters to Byron Claire made her position on this matter clear. Speaking of Dante, she wrote:

> Do you remember his inscription over the gate of Hell--
> "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate."
> I think it is a most admirable description of marriage. The subject makes me prolix. I can never resist the temptation of throwing a pebble at it as I pass by.[8]

Claire's aggressively emancipated attitude could not have been more unfortunate as an approach to Byron. He soon made it clear to her that the learned lady was not his favorite companion. Too late Claire attempted to vindicate her extreme ideas and to cover her blue stockings with her petticoat: "I, who was educated by Godwin, however erroneous my creed, have the highest adoration for truth," she proclaimed in a later

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[7] Ashley MSS., 9 September 1814.

[8] Prothero, op. cit., III, 433.

letter.[9] The convictions which she acquired easily with her education were not so deeply rooted that she could not modify them if the occasion demanded. On 17 May 1818, she wrote:

> Now do, dearest and most amiable of Bashaws, send me a little [of Allegra's hair]; if you do, I will turn Turk to please you, and forget reading and writing and every other Christian accomplishment. Good God! If anybody could see how double I am getting with bending lowly to entreat the slightest favour of you.[10]

After the death of Allegra, Claire had no longer any reason to prostitute her principles. Her Russian journals reveal her as much a theoretical feminist as she had been in her early youth. She made notes of the deeds of heroic women, recorded conversations in which "we agreed to form a state upon the Turkish model, only that the tables should be turned and the men shut up in harems and kept by the women," or, more seriously, of "the necessity of Women's being free that Man may walk, unencumbered by his fair clog, more freely towards a noble destiny."[11]

In later years Claire's theories about the role of women were expressed less in these terms of general humanitarianism and more in an unconventional and rather comic manner. She came to champion the cause of illegitimacy: "A legitimate

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[9] Murray MSS., quoted in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 212.

[10] Ibid., p. 238.

[11] Huscher, op. cit., pp. 91-96.

child is to its mother nothing but a task that was imposed upon her, labour extorted from her by a sense of her helplessness to resist an imperious master."[12] In another letter she wrote about Mr. Fox, "the un natural son of Lord Holland," and explained why she did not accept the Bennets' invitations to sit with them when Fox was calling:

> I was afraid that I should in an untimely moment say to Mr. Fox Good God! as you had the misfortune to be born after the marriage of your parents how I pity you! Poor man, you might have come into the world interesting and romantic, the child of love and here you are the child of ordinary routine and the most shameful hum-drummery. What is very amusing is that my youngest pupil imbibes all my sentiments. She heard her mother talking of the Stroud election and she asked her if it was the natural Mr. Fox that had ceded his seat to Lord John. I think I can with certainty affirm all the pupils I have ever had will be violent defenders of the Rights of Women. I have taken great pains to sow the seeds of that doctrine wherever I could.[13]

Of course such a passage was designed to shock and to amuse, and it undoubtedly succeeded equally well at each.

By 1838 Claire was not allowed to see the Bennet children without the company of a third party.[14] Claire herself offered no explanation for this proscription, but it is possible

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[12] Abinger MSS., 16 September 1834. For the complete text of this letter, see Appendix G. The intentionally comic effect is heightened when one realizes that it is addressed to Mary Shelley, the devoted mother of a perfectly legitimate son.

[13] Abinger MSS., 2 June 1835.

[14] Abinger MSS., PM. 7 April 1838.

to imagine the effect of her teaching, even in the most jocular manner, on the parents of the young ladies she had been employed to instruct. The rights of women and the privilege of illegitimacy recur in Claire's letters of these years with enough regularity to suggest that she was particularly infatuated with the ideas at that time. After 1840 her views appear to have become much more conventional, and she set about match-making with the assiduousness of the traditional maiden aunt.

The pattern of development revealed in the history of Claire's interest in the rights of women is representative of much of her thinking: in her youth she reflected enthusiastically the opinions of those around her, even when those opinions conflicted with each other; her theories were not grounded deeply in any universal understanding of the problems of society, and she was thus able to make compromises without serious misgivings; as she grew older her attitudes solidified and became at times exaggerated until they appeared almost crack-brained; but in her old age she accepted rather easily the prevailing conventions of the time.

Another aspect of Claire's thinking which followed this general pattern was her religion. As was to be expected, she was as a young girl an ardent atheist in the tradition of Godwin and Shelley. Her early letters to Byron reflect this freedom from "vulgar prejudice."[15] In April, 1818, she

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[15] See above, pp. 89-90.

recorded Shelley's song on the crossing of Mount Cenis:

> Now Heaven neglected is by Men
> And Gods are hung upon every tree
> But the more for loss of them
> Shall this fair world unhappy be.[16]

A few days later she copied several passages from Tartuffe as representative of the inhumanity of the doctrines of Christianity.[17] In the cathedral in Milan she mused:

> The works of Man are noble and wonderful--The sensation of veneration we feel on entering this magnificent & solemn building is common to all but the vulgar attribute that to the presence of the Deity which is more properly an hommage to the Works of Man.[18]

By 1820 Claire's religious convictions, under the pressure of Byron's disapproval, had begun to readjust themselves. In her journal she quoted Swift's epigram on Tweedledum and Tweedledee and followed it by the statement (later crossed out):

> I find it strange that such a hatred should exist between Christians & Atheists when the whole difference of their creed consists in the first believing God made man after his own Image whilst the other that Man made God after his own image.[19]

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[16] Ashley MSS., 8 April 1818. This entry summarized about a week's activities.

[17] Ashley MSS., 9 April 1818.

[18] Fragment of Claire's journal in the possession of Mr. Pforzheimer, 23 April 1818.

[19] Ashley MSS., 9 July 1820.

Having thus whittled down the controversies of the centuries, Claire could probably justify her departure from the ideas of Shelley for a position which she hoped would place her in a better light with Byron. "I should never allow her Allegra to be taught to disbelieve in what I myself believe," she wrote to him; "therefore you may be assured that, in whatever way you desire, she shall be taught to worship God."[20] Not many months later she was satirizing with equal acerbity both Byron's religious vacillations between atheism and orthodoxy and Shelley's murderous attitude toward the Christ child.[21] She herself seemed to be keeping a foot in each camp.

After the death of Allegra, Claire reverted to a kind of atheism, but it was a different sort from her earlier cheerful irreverence. "Life thank God, must finish," she wrote to Jane Williams from Vienna in 1822; "it is the only consolation the wretched have to know they are not eternal."[22] During the following fifteen years of her life Claire occasionally garnished her letters with such morbid, cynical, and world-weary sentiments as this.[23] Twice from Russia she hinted darkly of

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[20] Murray MSS., quoted by George Paston, "New Light on Byron's Loves. VI. Claire Clairmont: The Struggle for Allegra," Cornhill Magazine, CL (September, 1934), 269.

[21] Ashley MSS., 8 November 1820. These caricatures are quoted in part in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 126.

[22] Abinger MSS., 24 October 1822.

[23] Two good examples of the continuity of this gloomy fatalism are to be found in the two letters in Appendix G.

suicide, but said that she forbore because of the pain such an act would give to those who cared for her.[24]

In the 1830's, nevertheless, she still maintained a firm anti-Christian stand similar to the attitude of her youth and rather like Shelley's at the time that he wrote Queen Mab. In a letter to Jane Williams she wrote:

> I am glad there is religion in Moore's Life [of Byron]. It was just what there ought to be. When every action of a person's life is not as clear as daylight, every well wisher to the good cause must desire that person to profess Christianity. Nothing can be more hurtful to Philosophy than to permit it to be supposed that such men as Moore and Byron had the slightest pretensions to the style of her followers. They are no doubt men of parts, men of fashion--and respectable men as far as not giving much trouble to the Police goes; but being mere smatterers in Learning, are naturally Christians, and of consequence their actions are perpetually at variance with Reason and truth Simplicity and every other good and desirable thing it contemplates; it is not therefore to be wondered at, that those who keep constantly staring at the image of a man nailed on a cross should become weak miserable and pitiable as the object they gaze at.[25]

It is important to remember that Claire's letters provided almost her only outlet for the periods of depressed spirits which she sometimes suffered; in her professional capacity of governess she was obliged to present a more hopeful view of the universe. This divided attitude led her into some personal embarrassment in 1835, after the death of Lady Mountcashell,

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[24] Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1827. Cf. Abinger MSS., 27 October 1825, in which Claire discusses the suicide of a fellow-governess.

[25] Abinger MSS., 3 April 1830.

when she was called upon to write letters of condolence and encouragement to Laura. She explained this predicament to Mary Shelley:

> She is an Atheist and the conviction that she shall never see her mother more almost distracts her. I, as a governess have always been obliged to declare that I believe in the Immortality of the Soul, whilst the truth is that the only consolation I have is in the contrary opinion. My disgust, my horror of Life is so great, I cannot think without shrinking of its being eternal.[26]

In the same letter Claire confessed to Mary both the depths of her despair and the terror of her doubts. Not only did Claire's wry philosophy contain nothing constructive to support the distracted Laura; it seemed at times to fail Claire herself:

> I am sick and weary all day long and the only way I bear up is by repeating to myself--sometime I shall feel this no more--shortly I shall be dust--I shall repose--nothing will disturb me. No one can tell the anguish I experience when a doubt on this point intrudes as sometimes happens; the fearful question of may not that power which has called you into life here, call you into life in some other place, presents itself sometimes and fills me with dismay.[27]

The atheism which Claire espoused represented an intellectual revolt against superstition. Yet a strong element of something very like superstition colored Claire's thinking from the days of her youth. "Interesting conversation

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[26] Abinger MSS., 2 June 1835.

[27] *Ibid.*

interrupted by Clara's childish superstition," wrote Shelley in his journal on 22 December 1814.[28] Both Shelley and Mary were profoundly interested in the dream world and in psychic phenomena, but both stopped short of the extremes to which Claire carried her psychic perceptions. One need only mention her "horrors" in October of 1814.[29]

Claire always took pains to record her dreams in her journal. These notes, meaningless in themselves, extend from 1814: "Very curious dreams or perhaps they were realities" to 1822: "I dream many dreams this night--or rather I continued my life of yesterday without that usual and pleasant interregnum sleep."[30] When a series of disturbing dreams about the illness and death of Allegra preceded the announcement of the child's death of a fever at Bagnacavallo, Claire became firmly convinced that coming events did cast their shadows before. She became a sort of gloomy Cassandra to her friends. More than on dreams, she relied on a regular cyclical return of troubles on their anniversaries. As early as 1821 Mary had noticed Claire's habit of thinking this way. In attempting to dissuade her from rash action in the spring of that year, she listed the evil events of the past six springs and concluded: "Now the aspect of the Autumnal

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[28] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 31.

[29] See above, pp. 22-23.

[30] Ashley MSS., 24 August 1814; 17 December 1822.

Heavens has on the contrary been with few exceptions, favourable to us--What think you of this? It is in your own style, but it has often struck me."[31] Claire continued to think in this style for many years. The year 1832, she knew, could not go by without imitating in some respects the fatal year 1822, and the death of her brother William fulfilled her anticipations.[32] When Mary wrote to inform Claire of her foreboding that she did not expect to live through the year, but would die at the same age as her mother had, Claire informed her in a melancholy tone that she believed thoroughly in presentiments, and that she therefore had "read these words over a thousand times" and believed them "as religious people do in the gospel."[33] But Claire moved by degrees in this letter from the doleful note of sympathy to a rollicking cheerfulness which probably did more to dispell Mary's gloomy horrors than a direct exhortation to optimism could have done.

There is almost no mention of religion in Claire's letters during the next twenty years. As her life became easier and freer after the death of Sir Timothy Shelley, the fatalistic passages became less frequent. It is in the letters to

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[31] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 144. The italics are mine.

[32] Abinger MSS., 1 February 1833.

[33] Abinger MSS., 25 September 1833. See Appendix G for the complete text. Fortunately for Mary her own presentiments did not fulfill themselves with the dispatch and accuracy of Claire's.

Tonie Clairmont that one finds a return to religious subjects and a remarkable change of attitude. The first paragraph of her letter on the death of young Charles Clairmont in 1856 is representative:

> I received an hour ago your sad news--poor dear Charley is now I humbly trust a blessed Angel, free from the sorrows which torture those who remain on Earth. It is a difficult task not to grieve--but when we recollect what Life is, how full of difficulties, how every day is full of sorrow, shall one regret that God has taken from this sad Earth, those of your children, who were too delicate to bear the harsh struggle; and removed them to a world of eternal Joy and peace. I have every hope you will, in part, see it in this light. At any rate I know your piety and that you will join with me in saying God's will be done. God is our Father--He knows what is best for us--and in His infinite Love and mercy has provided a blessed abode for your beloved Children.[34]

One's immediate reaction is to suspect that this is the sort of letter Claire must have concocted to console Laura for the death of her mother, but all twenty-one of Claire's letters to Tonie during this period are so heavily weighted with pious sentiments that one begins to realize that their expression was not so painful to Claire as it had been in 1835. Even in letters where no spiritual comment was called for by the context Claire indulged in such sentiments as: "If only we were all religious enough we should not suffer at all, if only we loved and relied upon God as we ought, we should feel happy at all He does."[35] Certainly Claire is to

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[34] Clairmont MSS., 12 May 1856.

[35] Clairmont MSS., 2 August 1856.

be suspected of adjusting the tone of her letters to suit the various attitudes of her correspondents, but in 1870 she defied Trelawny's disapproval by writing to him: "My own firm conviction after years and years of reflection is that our Home is beyond the Stars, not beneath them. Life is only the prologue to an Eternal Drama as a Cathedral is the vestibule of Heaven."[36] At about this time, or possibly earlier, Claire joined the Catholic Church. On his return from Italy in 1873 William Michael Rossetti reported her "a somewhat bigoted Roman Catholic," and Trelawny twitted her in 1875 that "no one is infallible but your Pope."[37]

Even her entry into the Church, which as early as 1820 had attracted her with its richness and order, did not bring to Claire the peace which she craved. After a half century of open defiance of death, Claire succumbed finally to reluctance and even terror, if one can trust the report of Pauline: "no one so frightened of death as she is, & saying it was all exquisite sensibility that made her dread to die, as only unfeeling brutes did not care whether they lived or died."[38]

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[36] Quoted in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 271.

[37] Letters, p. 251 and note.

[38] Clairmont MSS.; letter from Pauline to Willy, written between 1869 and 1875. Pauline's journal contains a comment on Claire's religion which is very difficult to reconcile with the reported statement by Rossetti that Claire was "a somewhat bigoted Roman Catholic." Pauline, herself a Catholic, compared her aunt with a Mounsieur Gautier thus: "on dirait qu'ils sont tous les deux de descente juive tellement ils détestent notre religion nos institutions nos prêtres et nos devoirs réligieux.--Clairmont MSS., about 1877.

Only in her very old age did Claire find the resignation and peace of mind she had for so long been pursuing, and then it seemed to be the death-bed peace of exhaustion.

Claire's attitude towards her friends and associates underwent similar vicissitudes while they were alive, but once they had passed out of her life they became fixed in her memory unchangeably. Allegra remained for Claire always the immeasurably beautiful and angelic child; Byron never ceased to be the viciously depraved villain; and Shelley floated forever through her memory haloed in an otherworldly light.

Shelley and Byron present the most significant examples of this persistence of memory. It is unnecessary here to review the ups and downs of Claire's relationship with Byron before 1820. For several years before Allegra's death she had been embittered toward him and had accused him of willfully neglecting their child. That this attitude never changed, but instead became more violent with the passing years, is illustrated in Claire's letters and reminiscences. In 1830 she gloated that Moore's Life was "sad stuff."[39] When, in 1835, she felt certain that she was to be one of the victims of the great cholera epidemic in Florence, she wrote a long letter to Mary and set aside nearly half of it to express her defiant damnation of her traducer:

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[39] Abinger MSS., 28 March 1830.

> . . . were the fairest Paradise offered to me upon the condition of his sharing it, I would refuse it. At the same time it would give me pleasure to know that he was happy, for I am not revengeful and desire pain to no one, not even to him. But for me there could be no happiness, there could be nothing but misery in the presence of the person who so wantonly, wilfully, destroyed my Allegra. Such have ever been my sentiments since her death; such they will ever be. It may be that I may have to undergo a million of existences in a million of different worlds; to live and die again in every one of the innumerable stars that stud the heaven, but neither cycles nor galaxies of existence, if I may use the term, nor a whole eternity of transformations can ever efface that sentiment in me.

She countered Mary's protest that the loss of a child was not certain evidence of malice in the parent, since she herself had lost William in spite of all her care, by saying that Mary had been a mere girl, inexperienced and unadvised, whereas Byron "was old and wicked, and laid a plan to get rid of his child in a way that should be certain and yet not expose him to the blame of the world." He had known that the air of the Adriatic was pestilential, for she had been careful to inform him.

> Draw, therefore, no more comparisons between yourself and Lord Byron. You loved your child, and would have given your life to have preserved his; he hated his child, and was determined to be rid of her. I say nothing of his conduct towards me; his lies to me and of me are a matter of indifference. I never expected he would behave well to me personally, because I knew how he hated Shelley, how he despised his poetry and his principles, and I had quite sense enough to know that defending all three ardently as I did would procure me his persecution; but I did not think he would wreak his hatred upon his own child.[40]

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[40] Abinger MSS., 16 September 1835.

Claire's feelings that she had been unjustly persecuted, that she had suffered Byron's vindictiveness because of her championship of Shelley, and that Allegra had been willfully murdered by Byron are all symptoms of an exaggerated and morbid hatred colored by an insistent self-rightousness which never allowed Claire to assume any of the responsibility for the deterioration of her relationship with Byron and therefore deprived her of any possibility of a sane and objective judgement.

Trelawny was deeply disturbed by her long-lived hatred as it appeared in the letters he received from her in the 1870's. He himself had no particular illusions about Byron, but in the interest of truth he did not want her to publicize her unfounded accusations. He particularly wanted William Michael Rossetti to obtain from Claire any documents which she might use to blacken Byron's name.[41] "Your relentless vindictiveness against Byron," he wrote to her in 1875, "is not tolerated by any religion that I know of."[42] She went to her death, apparently, still classing Byron with Caligula and Nero.

Her attitude toward Shelley was just the reverse of that toward Byron. Although during his lifetime he had frequently to scold her, and Claire not infrequently disregarded his

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[41] Rossetti, Some Reminiscences, II, 352.

[42] Letters, p. 246.

advice, his letters to her show that he never relaxed his affectionate tone and actually humored her more than any of her other acquaintance had the patience to do. Indeed, Claire's final evidence of his loyalty to her cause was the series of letters to her, written just before his death, in which he stated unequivocally his desire to break with Byron for her sake, for his own, and even for Allegra's.[43] Although Claire attacked Mary in later years for her friendly association with Byron at the end of Allegra's life and compared her to the spectator at a child's execution who went up to shake hands with the hangman after the death, she nevertheless made excuses for Shelley, who--

> . . . on the contrary acted like himself--it was his principle never to refuse his countenance even to the most guilty; he could not therefore now that he was touched withdraw; but his sad countenance betrayed how painful was the duty imposed upon him.[44]

It has been generally assumed that Claire's romanticised view of Shelley was a phenomenon of her old age. Instead, it appears that this attitude dates from the years immediately after his death. In her Russian journal, a little more than a week after her first entry, she inscribed the following "Notes for S--":

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[43] See Julian Works, X, 367. This letter seems to refer to Shelley's discovery of Byron's belief of the Hoppner scandal.

[44] Ashley MSS., "Reminiscences of Past Life," quoted by Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 256.

> His life was short but sweet--the life of a Poet--like a bird he /glanced/ floated in a rapid passage over the world, /too far removed high exalted to see/ and his flight was too high to admit of his seeing its defects, he saw only its beauties. His nest was ever built in the sweetest spots far from men, and here he had gathered together the fairest fruits Life can give--Love, friendship were his boon companions and filled every moment of his Life which was not devoted to Intellectual culture--His whole existance [sic] was a striving after virtue wisdom and he hurried on his course with such rapid eager steps he often overtook them. He tasted the Summer of Life and took flight ere the arrival of its inevitable Winter.[45]

Already the tendency to etherialize is present. Not only is the poet compared to a bird, but he floats rather than glances, and is too far above the world to see its defects.[46] This is the view of Shelley which runs through the letters, and in her "Reminiscences of Past Life" she wrote of "his exalted being, his simplicity and enthusiasm," and described him in the same vein as follows:

> His whole existence was visionary, and there breathed in his actions in his looks and in his manners that high and superhuman tone which we can only conceive to belong to a superior being to whom any moment of weakness or change is unknown. his life was a pictured dream, his existence /visionary/ a vision, his thoughts lofty supreme and powerful, and his actions dropped balm and peace every where like the wings of an angel. Through all his beauty and splendour, and even through that gay air of careless loveliness which was his usual presence, there peeped slight traces of melancholy and dejection, as if almost consciously he were longing for a brighter home than Earth could afford him. His virtue which never flagged a moment, his undying spirit, the contempt of pain and Death

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[45] Ashley MSS., 12 May [o.s.], 2 June [n.s.] 1825.

[46] A careful reading of the final speech of Prometheus Unbound or of Shelley's own letters to Claire ought to have served as a corrective to this misconception.

> his carelessness of riches harmony of his actions with his words, the calm majesty of a constant communion with high thoughts spread over all his being, sometimes won me to think him immortal had not a certain delicacy of complexion, a fragility of form and shape a certain grace of imperfection in his outward nature assured one he was human. You felt that there was a spell a silent agency in his presence, which opened a new world of nobleness and wisdom to one's gaze.[47]

Not only did Claire idealize Shelley into something very like Arnold's beautiful and ineffectual angel, but she judged people whom she met according to their approximation to this lofty standard. Throughout her life she was most content when she was with people who seemed to re-create for her the friendship and the high-minded conversation which she remembered from her early associations. It was his similarity to Shelley which endeared Hermann Gambs to her,[48] and when she met the Gaskells she wrote: "I thought myself restored to old times, and could almost have fancied Shelley was alive again."[49] This fidelity became almost a religious rite to her, so that she spoke of "the sect to whom I belong."[50] When she came to write her will in the last years of her life she demonstrated once again her life-long faith in Shelley's greatness and in the inevitable recognition of his genius.[51]

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[47] Ashley MSS., "Reminiscences of Past Life."

[48] See Abinger MSS., 27 October 1825.

[49] Abinger MSS., 5 March 1832.

[50] Ashley MSS., "Reminiscences of Past Life," quoted in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, pp. 258-259.

[51] See discussion below, Appendix I.

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Temperamentally, Claire had something like a split personality. In 1816 Shelley recognized this when he made his report--which Claire quoted to Byron--on the quality of her disposition:

> My sweet Child, there are two Clare's--one of them I should call irritable if it were not for the nervous disorder, the effects of which you still retain: the nervous Clare is reserved and melancholy and more sarcastic than violent; the good Clare is gentle yet cheerful; and to me the most engaging of human creatures.[1]

Years later, in writing her "Reminiscences of Past Life," she explained to her correspondent that to do justice to her subject she would need a novel as long as one of Richardson's, but she did attempt as an introduction "one little resumé of the whole":

> . . . that I have through the whole journey been able to discern in myself, the distinct and peculiar workings of two rival powers; one a principle of happiness, it is the integral part of my nature which leads me to welcome all that happens with an aspect of joy . . . but I was not allowed to do so, in short I never am. Instantly as if an evil power pursued me invisibly and breathed his own spirit into all that surrounded me, instantly every circumstance, every incident of every moment, the faces of those around, in short that mass of incidental impressions which we are accustomed to denominate circumstances became hostile to me, and forced me to be sad and sour as themselves.[2]

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[1] Murray MSS., quoted in Prothero, op. cit., III, 437. I have found no further mention of this "nervous disorder."

[2] Ashley MSS.

There is ample evidence that these two elements continued to war in Claire throughout almost the whole of her life, with now one, now the other in ascendency.

In the personality of the young woman, "the good Clare" dominated. Almost everyone who knew her in the days of her youth remarked on the charm and vivacity which were her outstanding characteristics. In a letter to Shelley, Leigh Hunt indicated that he could visualize Claire's reaction to what he was saying: "Clare rubs her hands and twinkles her eyes."[3] Medwin praised her rare esprit de société;[4] "interesting" was a word used time and again by her friends in speaking or writing of her.[5] Even when she was most miserable she was not accustomed to showing her low spirits outside of the family.[6] When out among comparative strangers and when dealing with her pupils she was sometimes even boisterous in her good humour:

> I amused myself very much at Pomikoffs [sic for Possnikoffs]. I thumped all the boys, which they bore with great patience. We jumped up and down on the sofa.--I jogged Johnny's arm as he was drinking his tea; it was spilt over him, and he was furious. The tall Nicola opened his mouth and said: "Oh! My God, Miss Clairmont, how you are funny!"[7]

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[3] The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt (London, 1862), I, 118.

[4] Revised Life of Shelley, p. 169.

[5] Ibid., p. 172. See also Mary Gaskell's letter to Mrs. Godwin, 21 September 1833: "I was glad to hear of your interesting daughter's being well."--Abinger MSS.

[6] See above, p. 98.

[7] 3 January 1827; Huscher, op. cit., p. 93.

This scene took place, not when Claire was still a schoolgirl, but when she was nearly thirty. Her letters show that she prided herself in keeping up this appearance of gaiety before society. Perhaps she enjoyed the dramatic role of the heroine of romance, hiding a broken heart behind a mask of social brilliance. The contrast between the cheerful and amusing life described in the journals and the melancholy tone of her letters suggests that if there was a pose it was not all in the journals. In the same January as the tea-spilling romp she wrote to Jane Williams:

> In the meantime while the page of fate is unrolling I feel a secret agitation which consumes me the more so from being repressed. I am fallen again into a bad state of health, but this is habitual to me upon the recurrence of winter. What torments me the most, is the restraint I am under of always appearing gay in society which I am obliged to do to avoid their odious curiosity.[8]

Although very rarely in Claire's life was the vivacity and gaiety of her character entirely submerged, still despite her struggles to be cheerful or at least witty, the melancholy and sarcastic vein sometimes got the better of her. Perhaps this side was never so apparent to the people around her as it was in her letters, always the outlet for her moods of depression. And perhaps even that depression was dramatized and exaggerated to call forth from her correspondents the attention and sympathy which she craved.

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[8] Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1833.

The fact is that the complaint of misery does intrude more and more frequently as the years advance. On 10 June 1820 Claire inscribed in her journal the following quotation: "He who keeps his grief within his own breast, is a can[n]ibal of his heart."[9] In her later years Claire could never be accused of this sort of cannibalism. Her grief was lavishly shared. But nearly always her complaints were made in the form of complicating "strange webs of melancholy mirth"; she generally took a jocular view of her wretchedness. Even in her most "inexpressibly low-spirited" letter to Mary on departing from Italy in 1822 she assumed this tone:

> I mean to chew rhubarb the whole way, as the only diversion I can think of at all suited to my present state of feeling, and if I should write you scolding letters, you will excuse them, knowing that, with the Psalmist, "Out of the bitterness of my mouth have I spoken."[10]

Ten years later she still made entertaining reading of a dismal subject:

> I can say from experience, that the wonderful variety there is of miseries in this world is truly astonishing; if some Linnæus would class them as he did flowers, the number of their kinds would far surpass the boasted infinitude of the vegetable creation. Not a day nor hour passes, but introduces me to some new pain, and each one contains within itself swarms of smaller ones--animalculæ pains which float up and down in it, and compose its existence and their own. What Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse was for love, I am for pain--all

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[9] Ashley MSS.

[10] Abinger MSS., [13 September 1822].

> my letters are on the same subject, and yet I hope I do not repeat myself, for truly, with such diversity of experience, I ought not.[11]

Sometimes Claire's humorous protests against her fate sound rather like the complaint of Mrs. Joe in Great Expectations: "I'm rather partial to Carols myself, and that's the best of reasons for my never hearing any." Apropos of some money she had sent to Jane Williams, she wrote:

> I am so accustomed to unfortunate endings that I was not at all surprized that a thing that I thought ought from its simplicity to have gone straight as an arrow to its final destination should make such extraordinary zig-zags as that money did. It would never have been a thing belonging to me, if it had not been thwarted from its purpose and destroyed.[12]

Sometimes she anticipates the philosophy of Miniver Cheevy (though not his solution):

> It was not thus in the time of the Greeks; and this reflection makes me tired of life, for I might have been understood in the time of Socrates, but never shall be by the moderns. For this reason I do not wish to live, as I cannot be understood; in order, therefore, not to be despised, I must renounce all worldly concerns whatever.[13]

As Claire grew older her references to her miserable state became less and less jocular and increasingly desperate. She

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[11] Abinger MSS., 26 October 1832.

[12] Abinger MSS., 14 March 1828. Cf. her letter to Mary about her desire to purchase the opera box: "of course the theatre will burn."--Ibid., 29 May 1845.

[13] Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1827. Here Claire's knowledge of Greek life seems to have deserted her.

felt the inroads of the governess's life more and more bitterly and once went as far as to describe her young charges as "hideous" and "vicious." Although in 1832 she was living in Pisa and seeing regularly her most sympathetic and devoted friends, Mrs. Mason and her daughters, she wrote to Mary:

> From morning to night, month after month, and year after year, never to see a person one cares a pin to see; to be the prey of every species of suffering; to be surrounded by big demons, who torment you without ceasing; to have one's soul ever full of rage and despair. What a life! Has Hell anything worse to offer? I frankly confess, I am driven to such a pitch of frenzy by it, there is no crime, however dreadful, there is no horror I would not perpetrate, to deliver myself from my present state.[14]

In this letter she appealed directly for assistance in removing herself from so wretched position. Usually, however, the appeal was for sympathy only. At the end of a lengthy and lugubrious account of her persecutions from the time of her childhood, her miseries as a governess, and her ill health, she addressed Mary:

> Excuse my talking so much of myself. I came to the conclusion that it was right--it struck me that the indifference to my sufferings that has been shewn might proceed from my silence causing it to be imagined that I was such a beast I could not and did not feel all that has been inflicted on me.[15]

By her advanced middle age this feeling of neglect had hardened into a self-righteousness very close to a martyr complex,

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[14] Abinger MSS., 24 March 1832.

[15] Abinger MSS., 2 June 1835.

as revealed in her letters to Tonie Clairmont about the marriage of Clari to Alexander Knox.[16] In a letter to Pauline at about this time she attacked Knox and his wife for living in comparative luxury while their relatives in Germany were in straitened circumstances. "But you know I never do these things," she wrote. "I never take one pleasure in Life."[17] Claire did indeed suffer both in personality and in character from the circumstances which made her "sad and sour as themselves."

Mary and Hogg knew Claire well enough to read her letters in the right spirit. Their reactions to them provide the clue to a well-balanced reading of what seem at times to be entirely fantastic expressions of suffering. While Claire was in Moscow Hogg wrote to Mary:

> Wherever Claire might happen to be was the most detestable place in the world, I therefore thought little of her complaints; that she thought it fine, like the heroine of a novel, to be always dissatisfied, & hoped that some prince in disguise might wish for a discontented wife to try his patience with,--might relieve her sighs; but I fear she has but too much reason to be annoyed with Russia.[18]

Mary, on her side, wrote to Maria Gisborne in 1835:

> We had a very clever letter from Claire the other day--she describes the annoyances of her life--and her rage at Church, when the Clergyman begins "We have followed too much the

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[16] See Appendix H.

[17] Clairmont MSS., PM. 16 March 1852.

[18] Abinger MSS., 26 September 1824.

devises and desires of our own hearts"--"I," she continues, "who am always forced to do everything my heart detests."[19]

Trelawny, on the other hand, was unable to detect the "clever" note in the letters he received and felt the necessity of lecturing her very seriously on the matter:

> You deceive yourself, Clare, in thinking there are none so wretched as yourself! All who are unfortunate make the same assertion. I have known those who were out of all comparison more wretched . . . but you have learnt to brood and dwell exclusively on your own sufferings till you fancy you are alone suffering.[20]

Certainly it is true that Claire often exaggerated her complaints from semi-literary motives, for her grotesque accounts are often clever and entertaining. But the increasing number of such letters over a period of many years suggests that Trelawny had some reason to be disturbed by what he read. The melancholy from which Claire suffered was exactly what she termed it--"an evil power."

There is a third aspect of Claire's temperament which deserves attention, one not mentioned by Shelley but nevertheless recognized by Claire herself and described in the letter to Byron in which she said:

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[19] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 91.

[20] Letters, pp. 168-169. This letter was written in answer to Claire's of 25 June 1831.

> . . . my temper is inconstant and volage--I want dignity: I do not, like our Mary, sail my steady course like a ship under a gentle and favourable wind. But at thirty I shall be better, and every year I hope to gain in value.[21]

This pathetic wish was not to be realized, and the passage is painfully ironic in its mistaken hope for the future. Claire sailed through her entire life volatile and inconstant of temper. This quality was probably related to the nervous disorder of which Shelley had spoken, but tended to be more violent than sarcastic. It manifested itself in frantic bids for attention, like her "horrors" over the levitation of her bed pillow, and in temper tantrums and "scenes." Such outbreaks reveal Claire at times as exactly the "little fiend" she was attempting to disprove herself to Byron when she asked Shelley for his evaluation.

Shelley might have guessed this scene-making propensity in Claire. Even her own journal reflects it at an early date: "Get up late--Go down in a very ill humour--Quarrel with Shelley."[22] A few days later she wrote, then effaced, "I in a fit of fury write a letter to Mama but do not send it--It may only irritate them with us."[23]

She was not always so restrained in withholding the manifestations of her fits of fury. Her letter to Byron on

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[21] Murray MSS., quoted in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 233.

[22] Ashley MSS., 14 October 1814.

[23] Ashley MSS., 20 October 1814.

hearing of the death of Allegra was so shocking that Byron returned it to Shelley as evidence of her fiendishness.[24] Although she protested lifelong devotion to Madame Kaisaroff, she quarreled with her and her daughter so violently on the road to Tuplitz that she was forced to part from them temporarily.[25] Into this pattern the scene at Field Place described by Lady Shelley to Maude Rolleston does not seen entirely out of character.[26] And in her old age in Florence she continued to have her occasional temperamental outbursts; Pauline in her journal noted the recurrence of her aunt's "attacks of rage."[27]

iii

The picture Claire presents of herself in her letters and journals is scarcely that of a well-balanced woman, but it hardly merits the glib charge of insanity which has sometimes been made. The question of her sanity does raise itself, however, and must be examined. In 1869 William Michael Rossetti wrote to Richard Garnett, "Trelawny tells me that Miss Clairmont has been made, and in an asylum, and he seems

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[24] Julian Works, X, 387.

[25] Abinger MSS., 22 July 1828. See above, p. 147.

[26] See Appendix H.

[27] Clairmont MSS.

to suppose that she is in one now."[1] In that year Pauline set out from Vienna to stay with Claire, since she was no longer needed to nurse her mother, Tonie, who had died in November of 1868. She quarreled with Claire from the start, and her journal entries were violently abusive, but the closest she came to a charge of madness is an entry of 7 August 1870: "Poor Aunt is much to be pitied--her nerves are all shattered--some say from dissipation--but I really think from grief vexation & retirement --& regret now. Her friends advised her badly."[2] Again the charge of a nervous disorder appears, but shattered nerves alone can hardly be construed as madness. It is hard to imagine that in all the years that Pauline lived with Claire and kept an unrestrained diary she would have failed to mention any history of insanity if she had known of it.

Even if it could be proved that Claire had never been in an asylum, one would still not have demonstrated that she was never insane. Lacking a doctor's certificate, one can never expect to prove either sanity or insanity; all that one can

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[1] Letters about Shelley, p. 25. The improbability of Claire's being mentally ill in 1869 is fairly easy to demonstrate. Letters among the Clairmont MSS. show that she was comfortably at home in the Via Valfonda in 1869 and that she entertained her nephew Willy as well as his sister-in-law Alma Pichler there during that year. Thirteen of Willy's letters to Claire for 1869 have been preserved, and they contain no hint that she was indisposed.

[2] Clairmont MSS.

do is to establish some of the criteria of rational behavior and to compare Claire's known attitudes and actions with them. This can at least result in an evaluation of the available evidence, but it cannot attempt the kind of conclusion which only a psychiatrist would be able to make, and then only if he had more than the biassed written sources which are now available.

In the following discussion no attempt has been made to intrude upon the domain of the psychiatrist or upon his vocabulary. I have tried to rely on the kind of everyday standards which Claire's contemporaries would have had to use in judging her behavior. I take it for granted that a person may very well have a number of private obsessions and may waver between cheerfulness and depression without carrying these tendencies anywhere near the limits of sanity and that in most people a good deal of unreasonable opinion can be taken for granted. On the other hand, when the things a person believes diverge too radically from what appears demonstrably obvious to those about him, he may be considered mad by his associates, and Claire can be shown to have ventured rather far in that direction.

She was always a girl with a highly active imagination. Several of her youthful "scenes" were the direct result of the overdevelopment of this faculty. After a night of discussing Gothic horrors before the fire, she was passionately convinced that her pillow removed itself of its own accord from the bed

to the chair. Remembering that she was hardly more than a child at the time, and a child steeped in books and conversation about the supernatural, one cannot consider this episode anything extraordinary. Other scenes at that time were perhaps more significant. Claire became upset on 19 October 1814 by something Mary said: "I was wrong," she admitted. "We soon became friends but I felt deeply the *imaginary cruelties* I conjured up."[3]

At the age of sixteen Claire was able to learn the difference between real and imagined cruelties, but she later lost that valuable capacity and suffered more and more from persecutions which originated in her mind. A great deal of the time Shelley had to explain things to her. After his death, lacking his firm guidance, she took up a philosophy reminiscent of Ariel's in "With a Guitar: To Jane":

> . . . the poor sprite is
> Imprisoned, for some fault of his,
> In a body like a grave.

The difference lay in the phrase "for some fault of his." She suffered and she was innocent. The obsession that she was being unjustly persecuted by a malicious fate is revealed in many of her letters. She was entirely free from the mistakes of Job's comforters. In a letter to Mary in 1832 she wrote:

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[3] Ashley MSS. The italics are mine.

> As for me, it is not for nothing that my fate has been taken out of my own hands, and put into those of people who have wantonly torn it into miserable shreds and remnants; having once endured to have my whole happiness sacrificed to the gratification of some of their foolish whims, why I can endure it again, and so my mind is made up, and my resolution taken. I confess, I could wish there were another world, in which people were to answer for what they do in this: I wish this, because without it I am afraid it will become a law that those who inflict must always go on inflicting, and those who have once suffered, must always go on suffering.[4]

The connection between a persecuting fate and the individuals who were the instruments of this persecution is a simple one, and Claire found many such instruments; her vindictive attitude towards Byron is a clear example. She even remembered times when she had been persecuted by Mary and Shelley.[5] Her nephew Willy noticed this tendency in her in 1849 and wrote to his parents that she "sees everywhere some secret plot or intention, and if you give your real cause she only says that you are much to [sic] young to deceive her."[6] In later years Pauline was constantly irritated by Claire's unfounded suspicions of her. The tendency to see everywhere plots against oneself may not be a symptom of outright insanity, but it is a clear departure from a balanced and rational view of life. In Claire's case it provides evidence that she had increasing difficulty in distinguishing the real from the imaginary.

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[4] Abinger MSS., 26 October 1832.

[5] See above, p. 34.

[6] Clairmont MSS., 3 July 1849.

Perhaps one of the habits of mind partially responsible for Claire's intellectual instability is her egocentricity. Over and over her journals illustrate her habit of projecting herself or her friends into everything she read. The passages from her reading copied into her diaries are generally related to her immediate interests. A quotation, for example, from Rousseau's Pygmalion ("O! vanity, human weakness, I am never weary of admiring my own work: I am intoxicated with self love, I adore myself in that which I have made") is labeled "Allegra."[7] In another passage she narrated an account from her reading in Filippo Pananti's Avventure e Osservazioni sopra le Coste di Barberia:[8]

> Camoens in a great tempest, saved himself by swimming; with one hand he divided the agitated waves, in the other he bore the book of his fame. When the Divina Commedia after being lost in the troubles of the civil war, was found & brought to Dante he pressed it to his heart and exclaimed: it appears to me as if I had received my lost immortality. (So would it be to me if I recovered Allegra as if I had come back to the warm ease /warmth/ of life after the stiffness of the grave: so /cordially/ cheerily would my feeling flow in their hitherto choked channels.[9]

This habit of reading everything in the light of one's own experience is anything but pernicious and hardly different

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[7] Ashley MSS., 12 December 1820.

[8] (Firenze, 1817).

[9] Ashley MSS., 12 April 1821. For further examples see entries on 17 August 1814, 9 February 1820, 18 February 1820, 18 March 1820, etc.

except in degree from the way many people read. It was Shelley who said, on hearing Mary read passages from some of Byron's poems, "I was not before so clearly aware how much of the colouring our own feelings throw upon the liveliest delineations of other minds; our own perceptions are the world to us."[10] The difference between Claire and Shelley on this point is that Claire's self-centered contemplation tended to narrow her intellectual world rather than to broaden it, so that she cut the ideas she encountered down to her size instead of expanding to comprehend them. As a result she was never able to generalize soundly from her reading or her experience.

While in Russia Claire declared that she was absolutely unable to distinguish between sentiment and thought.[11] This inability also contributed to her tendency to inconsistency. Mary had difficulties on more than one occasion trying to reconcile Claire's diverse attitudes. After she had read her charming philosophical essay on the inevitability of young love and the necessity for parents to read Shakespeare and reconcile themselves to their children's choosing their own mates and going their own ways,[12] Mary asked Claire in her

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[10] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 5.

[11] Ashley MSS.

[12] Quoted above, pp. 161-162.

next letter why, then, she had been so disturbed when Laura Mason married Galloni. Claire's answer sent her neatly constructed house of cards tumbling, though she could not be brought to see it: Galloni, she said, was a Corsican, with vulgarity stamped on his face, therefore was quite different from Gustave de Romand, of whom she had been speaking.[13] Claire's inability to generalize or to abide by her own abstract theories is comic here, but that same inconsistency came close to being tragic when she ignored her own advice and protested with passion the wedding of her niece to Knox, a young man who, by her own admission, had no such stamp on him at all.

Pauline Clairmont, after years of living in the same house as Claire, commented on this peculiar inconsistency in her summary of the similarities of her aunt and her acquaintance Monsieur Gautier:

> Another peculiarity of them both is to set forth the most surprizing theories, aggravating suspicions, unexpected opinions in the course of conversation & half an hour afterwards or the day after, deny every word they have said, & not even recognize their own assertions.
>
> This must be an involuntary operation of the mind as they both constantly praise their own veracity, sincerity, & frankness.[14]

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[13] Abinger MSS., 13 July 1845.

[14] Clairmont MSS.

All of the aspects of Claire's mental state discussed here add up to a woman whose eccentricities were firmly rooted in the intellectual and emotional habits of her youth. They do not necessarily indicate insanity. There is one limited period of Claire's life, however, which merits a closer scrutiny. She herself admitted that in the period following Clari's marriage in 1848 she was very near madness: "They have very nearly killed me; the depressed mind I bore for two years almost turned me crazy: but it pleased God to avert this misfortune from me."[15] This letter to Tonie, dated 6 September 1853, provides on analysis a remarkably clear insight into the workings of Claire's mind. In it one can perceive all of the mental aberrations just discussed--the imaginary cruelties producing a very real suffering, the egocentric self-righteousness, the illusion of persecution, the conspicuous inconsistency, and the continual exaggeration and dramatization.

The first sentences of the letter indicate Claire's primary purpose in writing and thereby throwing fresh fuel on a controversy already several years old: she took the position of innocence outraged. She was being held to blame for a feud which she was forced into and would have been eager to prevent. Her motives and her actions were entirely commendable. This vein of protesting self-justification runs all

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[15] Clairmont MSS.; this letter is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix E.

the way through the letter; Clari's behavior was doubly monstrous after Claire's "unwearied kindness" to her, to whom she had given "my heart, my purse, my faculties, my powers, all all I had."

Since she believed her own behavior to have been exemplary, Claire interpreted every suspicion of ingratitude as a vicious persecution. She could present no evidence in the letter of any direct reproach from Clari or Knox. The closest she came was in a look of "violent hostility" on Clari's face. Knowing that she had done nothing to merit such a look, Claire inferred at once that she was hated with "this fury" because the girl's mind had been poisoned against her. She immediately began an inquisition: "was it Mrs. Shelley," etc. Before she could satisfy herself with any details, the conversation was interrupted. This could hardly be construed as Clari's great delight "in torturing, plaguing and tormenting." The three examples Claire presented of Clari's shameless insults were delivered, not to Claire herself, but in conversation with Willy and Pauline. When Claire demanded, through Willy, that Clari apologize for her "infeeling [sic] and indecorous rudeness," she answered Willy that "they want to make mischief between us"--not an unreasonable reply for a twenty-three-year-old girl to make when her marriage to the man she loves is considered "insanity." Instead of seeing nothing worse than girlish petulance in her answer, Claire took it as unmitigated evil-mindedness directed at herself personally:

"By the word 'they' she of course meant me." Clari's final insult to Claire was also in a communication to Willy, "that I must be very well aware it was not true." Claire admitted that she might have misunderstood Clari's statement about Lady Shelley in their abbreviated conversation. It was in the expression of the words that she took offense: "am I wrong in saying that no lady or any one beyond a maid servant, ever addresses such language to another lady." She overlooked the fact that it had been addressed to Willy. Even more significant, she overlooked Clari's polite and charming letters to her shortly after the marriage. In them is no trace of scorn or disrespect, only affectionate greetings and a description of her happiness with Knox. Clari seemed not to be aware that she was charged with evil-mindedness and insolence.

The inconsistency of Claire's opinions is revealed at several points in this letter to Tonie. The first and most conspicuous is her statement, "I consider them both insane." It is difficult to imagine this from the girl who once wrote to Byron: "Have you any objection to the following plan? On Thursday Evening we may go out of town together by some stage or mail about the distance of ten or twelve miles."[16] And even if after thirty years she had come to regard her youthful escapade as madness, she had still written to Mary only five

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[16] Murray MSS., quoted in Prothero, op. cit., III, 436-437.

years before the Knox wedding a satire of the way her mother and Godwin had behaved when Mary eloped:

> Because a young Poet fell in love with a beautiful and quite young girl and persuaded her to run away and marry him, such a very natural thing to do, a thing that is done every day these past six thousand years they fell into a most violent state of disapprobation of him.[17]

One more inconsistency in Claire's letter should be discussed because it illustrates the fact that Claire was entirely sincere, not hypocritical as one might at first suppose. This is in her attitude towards Mary Shelley. Her solicitous interest in Mary's well-being and her statement that Clari had "torn the old friend of my youth from me after five and forty years that we had stood together" are in conspicuous contrast to the charges against Mary made to Tonie in the years just after the break. In 1850 Claire had written to Tonie of the Shelleys:

> Until they have made reparation for their insolence to us, it stamps with dishonour any member of our family, who holds any intercourse but a hostile one with them, and my resolution is taken, and I will part with any of my relations who do.[18]

Claire could not have hoped to deceive Tonie, to whom her inconsistencies must have been bewildering indeed; she merely forgot from one hour to another what positions she had taken

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[17] Abinger MSS., quoted above, pp. 161-162.

[18] Clairmont MSS., 1 August 1850.

and issued each new statement with the same dogmatic authority as she had the old. The basic ingredients were the same--the desire for approval, the refusal to admit error, the overactive imagination which exaggerated and dramatized and set her in the center of the stage. This does not seem to be insanity, but if it is, Claire was never nearer to it than in these painful years at the middle of the century.

iv

It is possible to look at Claire Clairmont's whole life as a continuous conflict between a romantic love of adventure and the conservative desire for security. At sixteen she was capable of running away to the Continent without expecting to see her native shore again. No utopian scheme was too fantastic to appeal to her. Shelley called her "la fille aux mille projets,"[1] but he himself was not very different in his youth; they shared many of the same theories and they each parted from their parents with equal abandon. As time went by, however, both Mary and Shelley came to regard such actions with soberer eyes. Mary in particular mocked this apparent flightiness: "Charles Clairmont says that he shall go to America; this I think a rather wild project in the Clairmont style."[2]

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[1] Julian Works, X, 395.

[2] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 41.

Claire's disregard for the kind of security which might have established her somewhere in a position of stability was not marked by the abrupt changes which characterized her religious and social attitudes. When she might, after the death of Shelley, have followed the counsel of her "Minerva," Lady Mountcashell, and settled somewhere near home, she struck out instead for Austria and then, against the advice of all her friends, for Russia.[3] In 1828 projects were still suggesting themselves to her: she talked about going out to India.[4] Nothing came of this scheme, however, and four years later she wrote to Mary:

> I hear Lord Mulgrave is going to be Governor at Jamaica. Is it not possible that Lady Mulgrave might take me as a companion? They say she is a most amiable person. Do think if you cannot manage this. Much might be done by speaking properly. Many persons would be glad of a well-informed person, who can read to them various languages, teach them German, write their letters, and of a lively, sprightly disposition; one who neither minds heat nor cold, nor hunger nor thirst, nor fatigue nor hardship of any kind.[5]

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[3] "Before she went any farther than Vienna I told her my opinion very candidly, I said I would rather be obliged to sit behind Mrs. G--'s counter from morning to night than be any one's *dame de compagnie*."--Abinger MSS., 22 August 1824.

[4] Abinger MSS., 14 March 1828. Cf. Shelley's letter to Hogg, 20 August 1821, in which he says he has some thoughts of going to India.--*Shelley at Oxford: The Early Correspondence of P. B. Shelley with his Friend T. J. Hogg* (London, 1944), p. 65.

[5] Abinger MSS., 24 March 1832. Note that it was from the hardship and particularly the cold of the Russian climate that she had only recently escaped.

Not until she was in her sixties did Claire move to Florence and begin to settle down, and she had lived at a variety of dwellings in that city before she found the one in which she spent most of the time in her very last years.

Claire's constant nervous changes from place to place show a long-continued defiance of a certain kind of security, but in other ways she settled down rather rapidly. In her youth she threw caution, both in action and speech, to the winds and did and said exactly what she pleased. Both the essentially conventional Emilia Viviani and the experienced and level-headed Lady Mountcashell cautioned her about this tendency. "Last night Claire narrated to me part of his [Shelley's] history," Emilia wrote to Mary and added: "Take care, however, to tell your affairs to a few people only; I gave the same advice to Clara already."[6] In a letter to Claire in 1823, Trelawny, with his frank mind to which concealment was hypocrisy, wrote to Claire: "I think Mrs. Mason must be in her dotage to give you such silly counsel: tell nothing: trust no one--ridiculous folly--to let others triumph. And give them such advantage."[7]

By the time Claire had received this letter she had felt the breath of the Metternich "gestapo" on her neck and had come to realize that her opportunity to earn a living depended

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[6] Quoted in White, op. cit., II, 475-476.

[7] Letters, p. 43.

upon her guarding the secret of her intimate association with Godwin, Byron, and Shelley. Count Scolnitzoky, President of Police in Vienna, found ample reason to have Charles Clairmont kept under constant observation by the police after receiving an anonymous letter charging that Charles was--

> . . . the son of the authoress of the "rights of Women"--his father was prosecuted in England some years since for sedition--his sister married Shelley--the author of Queen Mab Shelley was a deist--was deprived of his rights of a father by the Lord Chancellor of England--was the intimate of the late Lord Byron.[8]

Claire herself was very cautious in Vienna. She asked Jane Williams to be particularly discreet: "I beg, dearest, you will say as little as possible even to people who should ask after me, because it is of such consequence tattling on my account should not go forward."[9] Three years later in Russia Claire was still elaborately cautious. Again to Jane she wrote:

> Excuse me, dearest Jane that I enclose this letter for Trelawny to you. I have sent a letter to Mary by the gentleman who brings this under cover to John Hunt, because, as he is extremely versed in english litterature, I do not wish him to see a name upon my letter which might make him ask me questions.[10]

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[8] Clairmont dossier, Vienna state archives. The anonymous letter is quoted in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 170.

[9] Abinger MSS., 24 October 1822.

[10] Abinger MSS., 5 May [o.s.], 16 May [n.s.] 1825.

If all of this sounds unnecessarily melodramatic to the modern reader, he will be surprised to discover that not only was it entirely necessary, but that all of Claire's circumspection was not enough to protect her from the revelation she dreaded. In the next year she sent a letter to Jane by a friend, Miss Trewin, who would not be suspicious of Jane's name. But unfortunately for Claire, Mrs. Godwin sought the traveller out and poured into her ear the whole of Claire's story. On her return to Russia Miss Trewin spread the succulent gossip, to the horror and amazement of an elderly professor from the University of Moscow who had until that time held Claire in the highest regard. Claire wrote about him to Jane:

> I was to have undertaken this winter the education of an only daughter, the child of a very rich family, where the Professor reigns despotic, because he always settles every little dispute with some unintelligible quotation or reference to a Latin or Greek author. I am extremely interested in the child, he used to say, and no one can give her the education she ought to have but Miss C. The father and the mother have been running after me these yrs to persuade me to enter when the child should be old enough. I consented, when now all is broken off, because the scruples of my Professor do not allow of it. God knows, he says, what Godwinish principles she might not instil.[11]

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[11] Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1827. Claire had good reason for dreading gossip, for the emphasis was almost always scandalous. The very titles of some books must have been enough to terrify her: John Harman Bedford's *Wanderings of Childe Harold. A Romance of Real Life Interspersed with Memoirs of the English Wife, the Foreign Mistress, and various other* Celebrated Characters (London, 1825); or John Mitford's *The Private Life of Lord Byron; comprising His Voluptuous Amours, Secret Intrigues, . . .* (London, n.d.), which was translated into French from the tenth edition in 1837. With such featherbrained journalism rampant, Claire never knew when she would

This caution which Claire constantly exercised against gossip was a practical necessity. As she grew older, caution in all matters became more and more a guiding principle in her life. With good reason she became vigilant in matters of health, having seen so many children--Mary's babies, her own Allegra, her pupil Dunia--die helplessly, but she carried this cautiousness to such an extreme that it became one of the most conspicuous manifestations of her old-maidishness. When she was fussing over the old pirate Trelawny she was ridiculous and almost pathetic. "Take care of Trelawney and do not let him get his feet wet," she wrote to Jane; and later in the letter she added, "how glad I shall be to know he is in

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appear as a "Voluptuous Amour" or a "Celebrated Character." Her name was bandied in the drawing rooms of England to a much greater extent than she ever guessed. Henry Edward Fox entered into his journal for 14 January 1821: "Lydia White in the evening. 'My poor dear friend, Miss Godwin. Heaven knows what has become of her! She set out for the continent with the intention of getting with child by a man of genius. When she found access to L^{d} Byron, she said, "a thousand pardons for my frequent attempts to see you, but I have long wished to behold you, tho' I have not the honor of being personally acquainted; but let it suffice for an introduction to say, I am an atheist."'"--The Journal of Henry Edward Fox (1818-1830), edited by the Earl of Ilchester (London, 1923), p. 61. Mrs. Arbuthnot in her journal for 20 July 1822 recorded a report from a Mr. Bankes that Byron "had lived in Switzerland with two sisters, the daughters, I think, of Godwin; & he, Mr. Bankes, said he thought it lucky that his own daughter, a child of 5 years, had died, as it might have become his victim."--The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot, 1820-1832, edited by Francis Bamford and the Duke of Wellington (London, 1950), I, 173-174.

England and yet how frightened for fear he should catch cold."[12] By 1828 she had become for him "old Aunt," talking to him of nothing but "worsted stockings and marrying."[13]

When Claire left Italy in 1822 she left behind her all illusions about romantic love. In rejecting Trelawny's passionate advances she resigned forever "what men call love." When Jane Williams expressed the hope that Claire's friendly affection for Hermann Gambs might ripen into something more than friendship, she received the following answer:

> What I would not give to have an unhappy passion, for then one has full permission and a perfect excuse to fall into a happy one; one has something to expect, but a happy passion, like death, has finis written in such large characters in its face there is no hoping for any possibility of a change. You will allow me to talk upon this subject, for I am unhappily the victim of a happy passion. I had one like all things perfect in its kind, it was fleeting, and mine only lasted ten minutes, but these ten minutes have discomposed the rest of my life. The passion, God knows for what cause, from no fault of mine, however, disappeared, leaving no trace whatsoever behind it except my heart wasted and ruined as if it had been scorched by a thousand lightnings. You will, therefore, I hope, excuse my not following the advice you give me in your last letter, of falling in love, and you will readily believe me when I tell you that I am not in love with my German friend Hermann.[14]

When Claire looked back at the romantic excess of her youth she saw it more and more as a time of prolonged agony. She had rejected each offer of marriage that was made to her,

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[12] Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1827.

[13] Grylls, Trelawny, p. 153.

[14] Abinger MSS., PM. 22 January 1827.

since none of her suitors approached the romantic ideal of her ten-minutes' passion. But in her middle age Claire had attained the opposite pole, as extreme in its anti-romanticism as her early position had been in its unconventionality. "Youth in every one, and for every one, is one long Blunder," she wrote to Tonie Clairmont in one of her long tirades against youth and the young.[15] When she heard that Tonie had picked out a "romantic"-sounding girl for Willy to marry she replied:

> I own myself easily alarmed by the smallest appearance of that kind. My family has suffered so much from the romantic destiny decreed to them, that could I do as I wish, I would never let a niece of nephew of mine come within a thousand miles of anyone, or any circumstance that possessed any appearance at all out of the every day hum-drum of life.[16]

She was just forty when she wrote to Mary, "It is not much praise to the Supreme Lord of Life, what I am going to say, which is Thank God I can never be young again! At least that suffering is spared me."[17] She did not ever change her mind.

In 1814 Claire had concluded a quiet day at home with the indignant exclamation, "why this is merely vegetating."[18] In 1870 her niece went to her own diary to record her complaints: "Well--Aunt says--Don't strive for anything but let things

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[15] Clairmont MSS., 16 August 1856.

[16] Clairmont MSS., 6 September 1856.

[17] Abinger MSS., PM. 23 April 1838.

[18] Ashley MSS., 6 November 1814.

take their course." Three years later the tale was much the same: "Poor Aunt keeps saying---Dullness is good for you my dear."[19] Claire had once had eyes in which "a power like light doth lie," and a voice "wild, sweet, but uncommunicably strange," which had inspired Shelley to write:

> Her voice is hovering o'er my soul--it lingers
> O'ershadowing it with soft and lulling wings.[20]

A poet of another race than Shelley's would be needed to record the intellectual greyness of those last years:

> Because these wings are no longer wings to fly
> But merely vans to beat the air
> The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
> Smaller and dryer than the will
> Teach us to care and not to care
> Teach us to sit still.[21]

V

The ambiguous nature of some of Claire's characteristics leads one perhaps to allot them attention out of proportion to their significance. The natural weaknesses of age should not be allowed to cast a shadow over the brightness of a large part of her life. There were real weaknesses, of

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[19] Clairmont MSS., 28 July 1870, 13 April 1873.

[20] "To Constantia, Singing."

[21] T. S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday."

course, and they were always present. Nobody was ever able to live under the same roof with Claire for long without running into difficulties with her nervous imagination and stubborn independence. Mary Shelley had the most experience with Claire and recognized her limitations acutely. In planning a visit to Paris in 1843 she had to insist before she went that while staying with Claire she should be allowed complete freedom in her movements and her choice of friends, since on her last visit she had been censured by Claire for every coming and going.[1] The life-long relationship of the two women is reflected in both its dark and its bright sides in another of Mary's letters from this period:

> I would entreat you to banish the suspicions you too readily entertain with regard to your friends--but it is constitutional. Besides you do not consider any one a friend who is not willing to abandon all their ideas, habits & plans of life to adopt yours & unite with you--It appears to me that persons may be very dear & real friends who differ wholly in tastes & theories, & who could not be happy constantly under the same roof--but who feel & shew mutual esteem & affection.[2]

Claire's weaknesses were always too much a part of her charms for the two ever to be entirely separable. The very qualities which made her difficult to live with helped to make her a delightful acquaintance and correspondent. The most appealing passages in her letters reflect a prickly

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[1] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 201-202.

[2] Ibid., II, 224-225.

individuality,[3] but such extreme and original views would not be so entertaining on a day-in, day-out basis.

With the few friends with whom she was in reasonably complete intellectual agreement, like Lady Mountcashell and her family, and with her brother Charles and his family she remained on the best of terms throughout her entire life. The letters which describe her visits with Nerina Cini are masterpieces of light-hearted exuberance. Even when discussing a matter which disturbed them both, like the marriage of Laura and Galloni, they transcended the worries at hand with their lively sense of the incongruous:

> Into this small study she always harries me, and pours out her soul and I am well pleased to listen, for she is full of genius; when the tide has flowed so long, it has spent itself, we generally pause, and then begin to laugh at the ridiculous figures human beings cut in struggling all their might and main against a destiny which forces millions and millions of enormous planets on their way, and against which all struggling is useless.[4]

Any reading of the entire body of Claire's letters and journals from beginning to end leaves one with the impression that throughout the large part of her life Claire's imagination and sense of proportion, indistinguishable from her sense of humor, dominated, whereas the periods in which they seemed to desert her were the conspicuous exceptions. Even in her old age she

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[3] See below, pp.295-296 .

[4] Abinger MSS., 26 October 1832. See also Appendix G, letter II.

must have been agreeable and even enchanting to all but her immediate household. Only Pauline, who had to live with her, differed from her sisters and brothers, all of whom adored their Aunt Claire and after her death remembered her with enthusiastic affection.

Chapter III

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT AS A WRITER

Having been born into a family in which "if you cannot write an epic poem or a novel, that by its originality knocks all other novels on the head, you are a despicable creature, not worth acknowledging,"[1] Claire Clairmont took up her pen at an early age. Although she soon came to recognize her literary limitations, Claire continued to try her hand at professional writing off and on throughout her life. In addition, she produced a great quantity of letters, journals and reminiscences. The purpose of this chapter is first to trace the history of Claire's various writing projects and then to attempt a description and evaluation of the most significant of those which have survived.

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[1] Abinger MSS., 1 February 1833.

i

In 1814, when Shelley was working on "The Assassins" and Mary had begun her story called "Hate" (thereby giving Shelley "the greater pleasure")[2] Claire began a story entitled "The Ideot." She outlined the basic idea in her journal: "This has been for years a favorite plan of mine--to develop the Workings & Improvements of a Mind which by Common People was deemed the Mind of an Ideot because it conformed not to their vulgar & prejudiced views."[3] Perhaps her theory that the unconventional perceptions of the idiot mind might provide valuable literary material had its origin in her early acquaintance with Wordsworth, who made frequent visits to Godwin's home. Whatever its source, Claire's story has entirely disappeared. Perhaps it was transformed into a play, for two months later, when she was busily reading in the English dramatists, Claire noted in her journal: "Write a scene in Gertrude. Very shocking."[4]

By 1816 Claire had under way a literary project of larger scope than "The Ideot." This was the "unpolished stone" which she submitted to Byron, begging him to read it and to criticise candidly. Although he was to receive the whole

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[2] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 14.

[3] Ashley MSS., 10 September 1814. This was the very day that Mary began her story.

[4] Ashley MSS., 5 November 1814.

manuscript, Claire went to some length to describe it to him in a letter:

> My intention was this--To draw a character committing every violence against received opinion--one, educated amidst mountains and deserts, who knew no other guide than herself on the impulses arising from herself;--who, notwithstanding the apparent enormity of her actions, should however appear highly amiable, full of noble affections and sympathies;--whose sweetness and naïvete of character should draw on her the pity rather than the contumely of her readers, who, kindly attributing her errors to the neglected state of her education, and the unfortunate circumstances which first attended her entrance into the World, might imperceptibly be led to a toleration of errors, which, if laid before them without the disguise of narrative and romance, would infallibly disgust and terrify. To this end I intended an old clergyman to edite her narrative, who by his pious reflections might make it clear that the author was rather a Christian than an Atheist. To a common reader this tale would appear to be written as a warning to young people against extraordinary opinions; a beacon shining along the deep to guide the bark of youth into the safe heaven of received opinions and Papa's and Mama's good advice. But Atheists might see and understand my meaning. I would be exactly like a diamond, who to the right reflects purple and to the left pink. Gibbon's fifteenth and sixteenth chapters are most admirable models of this kind, and, by an intimate acquaintance with his style and manner, I should hope to follow, though in a more humble path.[5]

In her literary aims Claire had not changed very much since the period of "The Ideot." There is little evidence of an interest in a story for its own sake; like Mary and Godwin, Claire hoped to dramatise the difference between the vulgar and the philosophical intellect. One might easily wonder, as Byron must indeed have wondered, whether the esoteric intellectual theory was not so incompatible with the form of the

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[5] Prothero, III, 434-435.

literary romance as to be ludicrous. Any suspicion of ridiculous incongruity is confirmed when one realizes that the eighteen-year old romance writer took Gibbon for her stylistic model. Byron's comment after a perusal of the manuscript must have been candid to the point of brutality. In a letter on 17 November 1816 Claire wrote to him: "Now if I tell you all my thoughts dearest you mustn't bring them against me to make me look foolish as you did that hateful novel thing I wrote."[6]

Since none of Claire's juvenilia have survived, one has difficulty in distinguishing among the references to her writing which she makes in her journals and letters. It is impossible to tell whether or not "that hateful novel thing" which she showed to Byron was an expansion of "The Ideot" or "Gertrude"; nor can one tell whether the book which Shelley was attempting to market for her in the autumn of 1817 was a reworking of one of these or whether it was an entirely new production.[7] It was probably a new work, begun in Geneva when Mary began Frankenstein and completed in the following year.[8]

By 1820 Claire had temporarily abandoned the field of

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[6] Murray MSS.

[7] Shelley wrote to Mary, 6 October 1817: "My most affect. love to Clare, and tell her that I have offered her book to Lackingtons and to Taylor and Hessey, and that they have both declined."--Julian Works, IX, 248.

[8] For a discussion of this possibility, see above, p. 49 .

fiction and was trying her hand at a form which was undoubtedly better suited to her talents. From 5 April until the end of July she recorded in her journal that she was writing and copying her "Letters from Italy."[9] On the inside of the front cover of the journal for that year she listed a table of contents:

> On the country of Italy.
> On the Manners & Customs
> including those of the Country & those of the town.
> Pictures & Statues.
> On the [Belle Arts][10]
> On the Music and the State of the Opera.[11]

How colorful and sprightly a work this could have been can be inferred from the best descriptive passages in Claire's extant writings. One cannot but regret the loss of what may have been an interesting travel book.

Claire's interest in the German language began in 1820 when she began to receive letters from Charles in Vienna. By October she had engaged a German master, was studying the language with great thoroughness, and was beginning to formulate her plan of going to visit Charles. She was enough of a

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[9] Ashley MSS.

[10] The words in brackets are lightly crossed out.

[11] Ashley MSS. Claire was probably inspired to attempt this project by a reaction like Mary's to the Italophilic and unrealistic travel books by such writers as the Reverend Eustace. See Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 57.

linguist by the beginning of 1822 to undertake a translation for Byron of Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit. Medwin, in his Conversations of Lord Byron, quoted him as desiring this service:

> I have a great curiosity about every thing relating to Goethe, and please myself with thinking there is some analogy between our characters and writings. So much interest do I take in him, that I offered to give 100 l. to any person who would translate his Memoirs, for my own reading.[12]

On 9 March 1822 Claire wrote in her journal: "Translate a little of the life of Goethe."[13] Later in the month Shelley wrote to her:

> I am much pleased with your translation of "Goethe," which cannot fail to succeed if finished as begun. Lord B[yron] thinks I have sent it to Paris to be translated, and therefore does not yet expect a copy. I shall, of course, have it copied out for him, and preserve your's to be sent to England.[14]

Claire, probably eager to justify herself in the eyes of Byron, seems to have objected to Shelley's ruse. She still failed to understand the scope of Byron's dislike, for it apparently did not occur to her that her name on the translation might kill his desire to see any more of the work. Shelley, as usual more understanding and tactful than she, wrote in the

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[12] Pp. 329-330. The first part of Aus mein Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit was published in 1811; the fifth and last, in 1822.

[13] Ashley MSS.

[14] Julian Works, X, 366.

next week:

> Your translation of "Goethe" is excellent.--I did not understand from you that your name was to be told to Lord B., and I must now adhere to the story already told. I am sure you will gain a great deal by it--if you go on as you have begun. How many papers of the original are done?[15]

After Shelley's death, however, Byron was informed of the name of the translator. As Claire ought to have been able to predict, he lost interest immediately. "You may remember what Lord Byron said about paying for the translation," Claire wrote to Mary on the eve of her departure for Vienna; "now he has mumbled and grumbled and demurred, and does not know whether it is worth it, and will only give forty crowns, so that I am afraid I shall not be overstocked when I arrive at Vienna."[16] Mary answered with practicality:

> I would not go on with Goethe except with a fixed price per sheet to be regularly paid--& that price not less than five guineas--Make this be understood fully through Hunt before you go & then I will take care that you get the money--but if you [do] not *fix* it, then I cannot manage so well.[17]

In February Charles Clairmont wrote to Mary that Claire acknowledged receipt of about £12 and wanted to know why it had been sent. She would accept it only if it was a payment from

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[15] *Ibid.*, X, 368.

[16] Abinger MSS., 13 September 1822.

[17] *Letters of Mary W. Shelley*, I, 192.

Hunt.[18] If the payment was indeed for the Goethe translation, this reference is the last that is known of the project. It cannot be said whether or not it was ever entirely completed. Perhaps when Henry Colburn published in 1824 a two-volume English paraphrase of the French translation by F. J. Ph. Aubert de Vitry, Claire felt that the demand for an English translation had been satisfied.

While in Russia Claire did a good deal of incidental writing: articles for the Islavsky Gazette, the newspaper written within the household of Marie Ivanovna; a comedy of the Governesses; and an "Introduction to History," probably for a proposed collection of the lectures by Monsieur Gambs. None of these productions has been preserved. A manuscript fragment of a story, presenting what is essentially an idealized characterization of the group at Lerici, was probably written by Claire at about this time.[19]

In later years Claire published at least one of her literary productions: her unfinished short story entitled "The

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[18] Abinger MSS., 22 February 1823. There always remains the possibility that a payment from Hunt might have been for a contribution to The Liberal. I have, however, been unable to find any evidence, either internal or external, that Claire contributed to that periodical.

[19] For the text of "A fragment--," see Appendix K.

Pole."[20] In 1832, when "The Pole" was written, she also completed and submitted for publication an article or a series of articles about Italy. Perhaps she had decided to rework the "Letters from Italy" prepared in 1820. The first mention of her essay is in a letter from Trelawny to Mary, dated 1 September 1832: "If Bulwer makes any difficulty regarding the article by Claire, I shall readily, if you like, try the 'Metropolitan,' which seems as good, if not better."[21] Mary answered by sending the article, together with Bulwer's note of rejection, straight to Trelawny:

> Her Article is excellent and perfectly adapted, I should think for a Magazine. I have an idea that Lady Blessington is the person who is furnishing them with articles on Italy--and compared to Claire's they must be poor. Do let Marryatt see them --and make him be pleased with them--print them in the No. for November--and desire more. Take great care it is not lost and if he rejects it, let me have it back immediately--as I must get it in somewhere with as little delay as possible.[22]

To this Mary added a postscript to suggest that if Marryatt knew that the New Monthly was bringing out a series of articles on Italy he might be eager for rival ones for his Metropolitan Magazine. It has always been assumed that Claire's article

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[20] "The Pole," The Court Magazine and Belle Assemblee, I (August, 1832), 64-71, (September, 1832), 129-136. It has been reprinted in The English Annual (1836), pp. 32-74 and Tales and Stories by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, edited by Richard Garnett (London, 1891), 274-310.

[21] Shelley and Mary, IV, 1167. I have not been able to locate this or any other Trelawny letter among the Abinger MSS.

[22] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 66.

never appeared.

Despite this assumption, based on the fact that no article on Italy is to be found in the Autumn number of The Metropolitan, nor in any issue thereafter, there is a possibility that Claire's article was actually placed there by Trelawny. Miss Grylls states that "Trelawny's letter to Marryatt as editor of The Metropolitan to ask for a settlement before he went to America, was for an article by Claire that he had placed for her."[23] On 26 October 1832 Claire wrote to Mary: "Thank Trelawny for me for his kindness about the article."[24] Neither of these statements indicates definitely that Claire's article, even if accepted, was ever published. The puzzling evidence is an article, satisfying the description of Claire's, which appeared in The Metropolitan Magazine in June of 1832. It is entitled "Italy in 1832" and presents an over-all view of the peninsula with the avowed purpose of drawing an augury of the future.[25] In its reportorial style and its emphasis on prophecy it resembles the work of a present-day newspaper columnist. One of the most provocative things about it is the question which it raises: If Marryatt had by June engaged a reporter on Italy for his magazine, why did Mary and

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[23] Grylls, Trelawny, p. 196. This is presumably based on Abinger MSS.

[24] Abinger MSS.

[25] IV (June, 1832), 165-173.

Trelawny not know it by September? The very presence of the article "Italy in 1832" in the June issue of The Metropolitan ought to have discouraged Trelawny from attempting to place Claire's there.[26]

An examination of the article reveals nothing that Claire could not have written and a good deal which suggests her hand. The work is not signed, but bears instead the motto from Junius "Stat nominis umbra," a tag very much "in the Clairmont style."[27] The liberal political sentiments and the anti-clerical bias were both representative of Claire's views in 1832. The article is documented throughout with just the kind of illustrative anecdote with which Claire was wont to fill her journals. In the discussion of Lombardy the author lavishes his most eloquent rhetoric on a subject very close to Claire's intimate experience--the persecutions by the Austrian police state. It is not difficult to imagine the person whose every step was watched in Vienna writing the following description of the workings of that same tyranny in another land:

> Of the Austrian police in Lombardy, it is almost impossible to convey an adequate idea. It is an invisible Argus, whose millions of eyes are constantly on the watch--it penetrates

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[26] The only possibility which suggests itself to me is that the June issue of The Metropolitan did not appear until October or November. In that event, the article is almost certainly Claire's.

[27] She wished the story which she wrote at this time to be signed "Mont. Obscur."--Abinger MSS., 24 March 1832.

> everywhere, hears, sees, and knows, everything. One would imagine that it even haunted the air. Proteus like, it assumes every form: the domino of the masquerade, the livery of the footman, the moustache and glittering epaulette of the soldier, the tonsure and sombre cassock of the priest; it is seated in the academic chair of the professor, and enthroned in the luxurious couch of the courtesan.[28]

In this selection is contained a microcosm of the best writing in the article: the apt but not particularly original classical allusion, the clearly visualized details employed to give body to a general concept of tyranny, the balanced yet varied sentence structure. In the remainder of the article such felicities of style are comparatively few and the total effect is more journalistic than literary. It is as easy to believe that Claire could have written it as it is difficult to prove conclusively that the writing is hers.

After her spurt of literary activity in 1832, which Claire maintained was inspired by a need for money, there was no further formal writing, so far as can be discovered. Claire's literary output was thereafter confined to her voluminous correspondence and her scattered reminiscences.

In 1852 Claire apparently decided that the time had come for her to write her memoirs. She wrote to Jane Williams Hogg to borrow a portrait, presumably of Edward Williams, and received in answer: "You have travelled through so many countries and have such lively powers of description, that your

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[28] "The English in Italy," The Metropolitan Magazine, IV (June, 1832), 167.

Memoirs cannot fail to be interesting."[29] Twenty years later William Michael Rossetti noted that he had learned from Trelawny that Claire had some idea of forwarding her reminiscences for publication.[30] But all Trelawny ever received was a sequence of lengthy letters, not very interesting. Three years later he berated her for writing too vaguely of Shelley and encouraged her to write the book which he thought she ought to have produced during the preceding fifty years. "You can write very well," he told her, "omitting German sickly sentiment and exaggeration and eulogy."[31] In spite of this advice, however, or perhaps because of it, Claire never managed to produce any memoir continuous enough for publication.

ii

An examination of her uncompleted short story, "The Pole," which for more than a century was accepted as the work of Mary Shelley, should provide some idea of how much was lost when Claire's literary career proved abortive.[1] The major evidence

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[29] British Museum, Ashley 5036, 12 July 1852.

[30] "Talks With Trelawny," op. cit., p. 79.

[31] Letters, p. 247.

[1] See Bradford A. Booth, "The Pole: A Story by Clare Clairmont?" ELH, V (March, 1938), 67-70.

that Claire was the author of at least a large part of the tale is in a letter to Mary written on 24 March 1832:

> I have written a tale, which I think will do for the "Keepsake"; I shall send it home for your perusal. Will you correct it? Do write and let me know where I may send it, so as to be sure to find you. Will you be angry with me, if I beg you to write the last scene of it. I am now so unwell, I can't. My only time for writing is after ten at night; the rest of the tale was composed at that hour, after having been scolding and talking, and giving lessons from seven in the morning. It was very near its end, when I got so ill, I gave it up. If you cannot do anything with it, you can at least make curl-papers of it; and that is always something. Do not mention it to anybody; should it be printed, one can speak of it, and if you judge it not worthy, then it is no use mortifying my vanity. The truth is, I should never think of writing, knowing well my incapacity for it, but I want to gain money. What would one not do for that, since it is the only key to freedom. One is even impudent enough to ask a great authoress to finish one's tale for one. I think, in your hands, it might get into the "Keepsake," for it is about a Pole, and that is the topic of the day. If it should get any money, half will naturally belong to you. Should you have the kindness to arrange it, Julia would perhaps also be so kind as to copy it out for me, that the alterations in your hand may not be seen. I wish it to be signed "Mont. Obscur."[2]

A rough draft of the scene on the shore of the Bay of Baia appears in Claire's "Reminiscences of Past Life" and makes it perfectly clear that "The Pole" is the very story referred to by Claire in her letter.

It is immediately obvious to the reader of "The Pole" that Claire's ideas about the proper material for fiction had changed greatly between 1816 and 1832. She was no longer interested in embodying abstractions and promulgating social and

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[2] Abinger MSS., 24 March 1832.

philosophical doctrines. Mary occasionally returned to the field of grotesque fantasy in which she had enjoyed her first and greatest success and produced stories like "The Mortal Immortal"--a strange tale not unlike one of Hawthorne's. Claire, however, did not care to experiment in "The Pole." She preferred to utilize the proven narrative conventions in order to turn out an exciting tale that would be easy to sell. The theme of political liberalism is incidental to the plot and characterization; although the hero Ladislaw is a distinguished patriot and the heroine Idalie is the daughter of a follower of Kosciusco, the emphasis in "The Pole" is not so much on the general principle of freedom as it is on individual deeds of heroism in such specific encounters as the Battle of Ostrolenka and the romantic situation provided by the narrative itself.

The plot of the tale relies upon many of the conventional devices of melodrama for its effect. It is a web of coincidences: a coincidence that the Pole Ladislaw should have his carriage break down just where Marietta, a lovely Polish girl in exile, can hear him speak in his native tongue and come afterwards to his inn to sing to him; a coincidence that he should immediately be presented by the Princess Dashkoff to her beautiful and talented protegee--Idalie, the sister of Marietta. It is a further coincidence that the brother of these two charming maidens should be the head of a bandit crew and the treacherous agent of the perfidious Princess in her

plot against Ladislaw. In addition to the coincidences, there are many other melodramatic situations in the plot. The hero rescues the maiden-in-distress, Marietta, and several pages later her sister is in distress and needs to be rescued too. When he and the elder sister Idalie meet they fall passionately in love at first sight in the manner familiar to all readers of gift books and annuals: "And not alone for Ladislaw was this hour the dawn of passionate love. The same spell was felt in the heart of Idalie. One moment their eyes met and glanced upon each other, the look of exalted, eternal love--mute, blessed, and inexpressible" (p. 283).[3] There is a midnight meeting of the bandits, overheard by the faithful Marietta. There is a secret marriage before a "venerable priest," followed by the familiar dramatic irony when the lovers' behavior is censured by the crowd ignorant of the wedding. The whole fabric of conventional melodrama is capped by the inevitable happy ending.

Some of these devices are the necessary hinges of the plot, but some are employed to provide suspense for its own sake. Marietta has no real reason to answer Ladislaw's query about her nationality with a mystification: "Um! I am what I am; who can be more? But, Signor, one thing I must beg of you, do not ask me any questions about myself, nor any about Giorgio" (p. 280). At another time she tells her sister,

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[3] References are to The Tales and Stories of Mary W. Shelley.

"disgraceful as my present mode of life seems to you, it is innocence itself compared with the crimes they were leading me into" (p. 287). With the aid of such hints, never entirely explained, the aura of suspicion and intrigue is built up throughout the story.

It must be admitted that Claire Clairmont handled these rather operatic plot techniques with a good deal of skill. The melodrama becomes offensive only in the very last scene of the story, where Giorgio, bathed in gore, rises up in the moonlight from the floor of a temple at Paestum to incriminate the treacherous Princess Dashkoff and then to fall dead at the feet of the assembled company. This was probably the one scene contributed to "The Pole" by Mary Shelley.

For the secret of Claire's comparative success in her adventure into story-telling one examines in vain the characters which she has presented. One way of making a fantastic tale credible is to tell it in terms of characters so skillfully developed that they convert the improbability of the action into a credible possibility. But Claire's characters fall easily into melodrama's two camps--the good people, incredibly good; the bad people, irredeemably black of soul. Actually, this was a reflection of Claire's observation of her friends and acquaintances, and in following Mary's example of modeling her fictional characters on real people she merely transferred her actual observation of life to the pages of her tale. It is known that Claire was pleased by Mary's use

of real people as models for the characters in her books. She longed to read Lodore to discover what part of it had been based on their common experience, and after she had finished it she praised the character of Euthanasia as "Shelley in female attire."[4] Her major objection to Mary's books was the idealized picture of Byron which was to be found in almost all of them:

> Good God to think a person of your genius, whose moral tast[e] ought to be proportionably exalted, should think it a task befitting its powers to gild and embellish and pass off as beautiful what was the merest compound of vanity, folly, and every miserable weakness that ever met together in one human Being.[5]

In "The Pole" Claire portrayed Mary's Byronic hero in reverse. The villian Giorgio is introduced in the act of manhandling his younger sister and is later described as "a complete ruffian; brave as a Pole and unprincipled as an Italian! a villain quite varnished in picturesque, like one of your Lord Byron's corsairs and giaours" (p. 284). Even his high-minded and affectionate sisters have no use for him and he dies after a colorful but unprincipled life as bandit chief and professional informer, without a scrap of sympathy from anybody. Claire made no effort to reconcile in her heroines their childhood love of their brother with their unmitigated hatred of him at the time the story takes place.

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[4] Abinger MSS., 2 June 1835, 15 March 1836.

[5] Abinger MSS., 15 March 1836.

There is no psychological conflict within the sisters' hearts. They are innocent, he is guilty; the heady wine of melodrama is thicker than blood.

The hero Ladislaw and the two sisters are characterized almost as simply as Giorgio. They are designed all on the same basic pattern, with more than a suggestion that Shelley, Mary, and Claire sat for the portraits. In all three there is a harmony of contrasts: all are freedom-loving and courageous, yet at the same time gentle and humble. Ladislaw is first described as--

> . . . a rare combination of youthful lightness and manly strength. His countenance, had you taken from it its deep thoughtfulness and its expression of calm intrepid bravery, might have belonged to the most lovely woman, so transparently blooming was his complexion, so regular his features, so blond and luxuriant his hair (p. 275).

The reader is informed of his almost superhuman feats in battle and is told that he is both profoundly melancholy and highly imaginative. Yet his characterization extends no deeper than this and does not bear too close a scrutiny. The Princess Dashkoff's description of the family of his beloved must have revealed to every gift-book reader the relationship of the mysterious Marietta and her assailant both to the heroine and to the plot of the story as a whole. But it is impossible to tell that Ladislaw has understood all this from her account. Instead of registering interest at this amazing coincidence he wanders off, "disgusted with this heartless conversation, which disturbed his ecstasy" (p. 284). Despite

the shallowness of characterization, Ladislaw does suggest, with his "highly imaginative mind," his "affection and unreserve of a brother" toward the young Marietta, his "tenderness and truth," Claire's concept of Shelley as reflected throughout her letters and journals.

The description of Idalie echoes the exact words of Claire's account of Mary Shelley in the "Reminiscences of Past Life" which contains the description of Baia later incorporated into "The Pole". The biographical origin of this character is unmistakable. For example, in the "Reminiscences" one reads:

> Mary's hair is light brown, of a sunny and burnished brightness like the autumnal foliage when played upon by the rays of the setting sun; it sets in round her face and falls upon her shoulders in gauzy wavings and is so fine it looks as if the wind had tangled it together in a golden network. She wore it in its natural state, flowing in gauzy wavings round her face and throat, and upon her shoulders.[6]

Idalie as first seen by Ladislaw is described thus: "Her hair, of a golden and burnished brown (the colour of the autumnal foliage illuminated by the setting sun), fell in gauzy wavings round her face, throat, and shoulders" (p. 283). She, like Ladislaw, is "fearless but mild," thus combining the contrasting qualities common to all the good characters in the story. "In Idalie's countenance there was that expression of innocence and sublimity of soul, of purity and

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[6] Ashley MSS.

strength, that excited the warmest admiration" (p. 289).

Even little Marietta combines attractive and contrasting extremes. She appears at first to be perfectly untamed--a little rebel who likes absolute liberty. Almost immediately, however, she shows the other side of her character and behaves "with affectionate humility" (p. 279). This wild little prima donna seems to be an imaginative portrayal of Claire herself at sixteen: "apparently without any effort to herself, she breathed forth melody after melody for her own pleasure, like some lone nightingale, that, in a home of green leaves, sings to cheer its solitude with sweet sounds" (p. 280).

The temptation to autobiographical interpretation is dangerous, but under the circumstances almost irresistible. When Claire portrayed Marietta as aware of the imminent danger and destruction on every hand, yet appearing "dream-sick" to her innocently complacent friends, was she not recalling the days when her own warning cries were disregarded? Was she imaginatively recreating her role in the elopement of Shelley and Mary in 1814 when she described Marietta's part in the wedding preparations: "What the bashful, conscious Idalie would have done without her sister's help, it is difficult to guess" (p. 300). The little sister it was who "contrived to put up articles of dress for the fair bride's journey, and thinking of everything, seemed the guardian angel of the lovers" (p. 301). The situations were not identical, and no fictionalized account can ever be used as definitive evidence of the nature

of the occasion on which it was based, but the situations in Claire's story which parallel those in her life are interesting even if they may not be significant.

Only one of the characters in "The Pole" does not fall entirely into the simple pattern described. This is the historical figure of the Princess Dashkoff. Though heartless and scheming, the Princess has the humanity to be embarrassed and horrified at the bloody climax to her intrigue. Not Byronically inhuman, like the villain Giorgio, she does succumb to "terror and despair." By means of the introduction of this well-known figure, Claire managed to cast an illusion of reality over her tale. She had herself heard stories of the ruthless Princess from Russians who had actually known her, and she was obliged to be reasonably faithful to her second-hand knowledge of the Princess's character.

The secret of Claire's success in "The Pole" lies in just this sort of verisimilitude. As a creator of character she did not advance beyond Mary Shelley's precedent, but as a local colorist she left her far behind. Richard Garnett, the editor of Mary's stories, was impressed with the distinctive quality of the description in this tale:

> The visit to Paestum in The Pole recalls one of the most beautiful of Shelley's letters, which Mary, however, probably never saw. Claire Clairmont's fortunes seem glanced at in one or two places; and the story of The Pole may be partly founded on some experience of hers in Russia.[7]

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[7] Introduction to Tales and Stories of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, xii-xiii.

Most of Mary's stories depend for much of their charm on the accurate use of local color, and much of the superficial detail of "The Pole" does not go beyond this. Claire sets her scene specifically near Mola di Gaeta. She describes the botanical environment: "blossoming shrubs, enourmous aloes, floating tangles of vines, and a thousand species of parasite plants peculiar to the South" (p. 274). She introduces words of Polish, Italian, and French, and makes reference in a footnote to a peculiarity of Russian vocabulary. Her fisher boys on the beach dance a tarantella. All these details lend a decided air of authority to the story and are extremely helpful in making the conventionalities of plot more palatable.

Claire's powers of description, however, go well beyond the merely decorative or historical value of local color. Her most important departure from the style and technique of Mary Shelley and of the majority of the writers for the "Keepsakes" and annuals is in her highly developed art of set description, an art almost entirely out of favor in twentieth century fiction. In Claire's story there is a fusion of the guide-book or "Travels in Italy" detail, which places the setting in history and on the map, and the emotional or sentimental slanting of the words, which gives the description meaning in terms of plot, characters, or atmosphere. The hostelry at which Ladislaw stays on the Bay of Gaeta is thus described:

> The inn is built upon the site of Cicero's Villa. Beneath the balcony, and on each side, along the whole curve of the bay, stretched a thick grove of orange-trees, which sloped down to the very verge of the Mediterranean. Balls of golden fruit, and blossoms faint with odour, and fair as stars, studded this amphitheatre of dark foliage; and at its extremity the liquid light of the waves pierced the glossy leaves, mingled their blue splendour with earth's green paradise. Every rock and mountain glowed with purple hue, so intense and soft, they resembled violet vapours dissolving into the pale radiance of the evening sky. Far away in the deep broad floor of the ocean rose the two mountain islands of Ischia and Procida, between which Vesuvius thrust in his jagged form, and his floating banner of snow-white smoke. The solitary heaven was without sun or moon, without a star or cloud, but smiled in that tender vestal light which speaks of eternal, immutable peace (p. 276).

In reading this passage, Claire's reader enjoys the vicarious pleasure of travel in a far land. He has the satisfaction of feeling that the author had stood upon the very spot described and beheld the crescent of orange trees and the trio of distant islands. He has the illusion that he could himself set out, guide-book in one hand and a copy of "The Pole" in the other, and find the inn on the site of Cicero's villa, stand upon Ladislaw's balcony, and trace the footsteps of the characters through Naples and Baia.

Such purple passages as the one quoted are frequent in Claire's story, but they expedite the plot rather than interrupt it. Indeed, they are largely responsible for the literary plausibility of the behavior of conventional characters in the most conventional and melodramatic of situations. In a setting of such timeless calm, enriched by the semi-symbolic flower and fruit of the orange grove, it seems fitting that violence should provide merely a disturbing interlude, doomed

to burn itself out, and that the twilight peace of the happy ending should eventually prevail.

By a skillful handling of her setting, therefore, Claire partially surmounts the handicaps of artificial character and plot to attain a substantial degree of artistic success in "The Pole." By the introduction of the Princess Dashkoff she creates the illusion that the story might be true, although it is difficult to imagine that any reader would find this illusion complete. By the careful use of historical reference she adds an undertone of a depth of time: describing the boat which carried Ladislaw and Idalie from Naples to Baia she said that it sped along--

> . . . past the fortress where Brutus and Cassius sought shelter after the death of Ceasar; past the temples of Jupiter and Neptune; by the ruins of that castle in which three Romans once portioned out the world between them, to the Cumean hill that enshadows the beloved Linternum of Scipio Africanus, and in which he died. . .. ruin and grey annihilation are decked in eternal spring (pp. 290-291).

By the use of local color and an abundance of topographical detail, she enhances the suggestion of realism. Finally, by transcending the photographic descriptive realism with an emotional (and usually sentimental) atmosphere keyed to the moods of the characters and to the progress of the plot, she fuses the people, what happens to them, and the place where it happens into a harmony in which each enhances the other. Ladislaw's sentimental attachment to Idalie takes on a dignity by its fusion, in his mind, with the calm magnificence

of the Bay of Naples at night (p. 285). The picturesque and the romantic of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa, as represented by pastorally idyllic scenes and awe-inspiring ruins, are the popular tastes to which Claire caters in her story, but they are entirely appropriate to both her plot and its locale, and she exploits them unaffectedly without an excess of sentimental embroidery. Both the romantic passion of the lovers and the evil violence of Giorgio, which are melodramatized at Paestum, are almost made to appear the natural reflection of the landscape which they encounter on the voyage thither. Beyond the promontories of Sorrento and Amalfi, the hills--

> . . . covered with ilex, dark laurel, and bright-leaved myrtle, were mirrored in the pellucid waves, which the lower branches caressed and kissed as the winds waved them. Behind arose other hills, also covered with wood; and, more distant, forming the grand background, was sketched the huge ridge of lofty Apennines. Still proceeding on their way to Paestum, they exchanged the rocky beach for a low and dreary shore. The dusky mountains retired inland, and leaving a waste--the abode of malaria, and the haunt of robbers--the landscape assumed a gloomy magnificence (p. 302).

Even the modern reader whose taste runs counter to the conventions of nineteenth century sentimental description can derive some pleasure from this one story which Claire Clairmont brought near to completion. However serious its flaws may appear by any absolute standard, it is by comparison with the feminine effusions of the time a relatively superior production, meriting in its best passages comparison with Shelley's excellent travel letters. If Claire could achieve

this in one trial, it is to be regretted that she did not apply herself more steadily to the literary art. The nervous restlessness that prevented her from finishing "The Pole" after she had progressed to the very last scene worked against her, however, and the commercial muse who inspired her to take up her pen apparently did not provide adequate incentive to further achievement.

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The literary competence of a story like "The Pole" is not often found in one who has had no writing experience at all. Claire, of course, wrote continually throughout her life, and it is upon her journals and letters, rather than upon her lone short story, that her literary reputation must rest. Even though still unpublished, her journals have already attained a degree of fame for the quality of their writing. For the biographer of Shelley and his circle they are a primary source of the greatest importance.

When Claire inaugurated her journal writing in August of 1814 by chronicling her tour with Mary and Shelley day by day in a little red leather-covered notebook, she was following a well-established precedent in her family. Long before Claire's birth, Godwin had fallen into the daily routine of recording his reading, his writing, the place and company of each meal, the calls made and calls received, the plays seen,

the letters written, the major current events, and the state of his health. The habit of years had reduced his entries to a concise formula: "Jan. 26. Su. Mandeville, p. 29. Dine at Hunt's, w. Shelley, Hazlit, Colson & Hogg: PBS & M sup & sleep."[8] Godwin's diary was rarely expanded to anything more discursive than this rather specialized calendar, important primarily as a guide book to where Godwin's remarkably illustrious friends and acquaintance had been at any given time. There is a certain amount of this sort of routine recording in Claire's journals; she was as fastidious as her step-father in listing the guests at dinner, the reading and writing and play-going of each day, and in recording the state of her health.

Claire's "itch to record," however, went a great deal further than Godwin's. Although most of the basic ingredients which make his journal so valuable a document are present in Claire's, they are in hers usually submerged in the wealth of description and running comment. As a discussion of the life she and her companions were leading it matches and even surpasses the well-known journal kept throughout the same period by Shelley and Mary. Although it is doubtful that Claire ever anticipated the publication of her journal at the time when she was writing it, it is entirely possible that she always regarded it as the source book from which her future

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[8] Godwin MSS., 26 January 1817.

writing might be drawn. When she began journal-keeping she kept also a commonplace book, but after a short time she apparently combined the functions of the two and seasoned her diary generously with quotations and with reading notes. She described in detail the places which she visited and the way in which she had reacted towards them. Anecdotes which she had heard fill many of the pages. Rough drafts of critical essays, partially revised, are to be found. It is impossible to believe that Claire did not have some idea of working these fragments up for publication. She realized that Mary's diary of the 1814 trip needed but little re-working to become the very successful little book, the History of a Six Weeks' Tour. The Pforzheimer variant of Claire's journal for that period suggests that she may have intended to use her account for the same purpose.

As the raw material of literature, Claire's journal compares very favorably with Shelley's and Mary's. A few examples from the journals kept by all three during the trip from England to Italy in 1818 will serve to illustrate. On 12 March, Mary wrote: "FRANCE. Discussion of whether we should cross. Our passage is rough. A sick lady is frightened, and says the Lord's Prayer. We arrive at Calais, for the third time."[9] Claire's entry for the same day fills in the details:

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[9] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 93.

> Walk upon the Beach. ~~[Bathe my Darling]~~[10] Discussion whether we shall go. Major & Mrs. Hare. We do go in the Lady Castlereagh with Major & Mrs. Hare & some other ladies. The brine is very stormy. The Waves Mountains high. But the Wind was favorable & blew us in two hours & forty minutes into Calais. Mrs. Hare was much frightened & repeated the Lord's Prayer in her Distress, every now & then requesting her Servant to go on with it as she was prevented by Sickness. Nothing can be more delightful than Calais. The people are so agreeable & the the [sic] town is airy & agreeable. We stay Au grand Cerf. Detant. Go to Bed Early.[11]

In most ways the two journals complement each other. Shelley's description of the approaches to the Alps is richly detailed; Claire's entries never surpassed his best accounts.[12] Mary's notes on the crossing of Cenis, however, are sketchy and sparse, whereas Claire's for those days are nearly as complete as Shelley's best. He recorded the apple and pear twigs just becoming purple with the bursting blossoms; Claire revealed Shelley himself, in high spirits, singing his way across the Alps, comparing the mountains to God's corps de ballet and the Jungfrau to Mademoiselle Milanie. She, too, described the scenery, and her repetitious style reflects her own spontaneous exuberance:

> We see Cascades of Ice hanging in immense & frozen Masses from the top to the Bottom of Precipices. A sight I shall never forget was a flowing stream between two snowy Banks. We passed some Alpine Bridges. The Descent is most beautiful--The Road is wide & smooth & turns so often upon itself

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[10] Words in brackets crossed out.

[11] Ashley MSS.

[12] Mary Shelley's Journal, pp. 94-95.

> that the decclivity [sic] is scarcely felt. . . . The primroses are scattered everywhere. The fruit trees covered with the richest blossoms which scented the air as we passed. A sky without one cloud--everything bright & serene--the cloudless sky of Italy--the bright & the beautiful.[13]

As potential biographical source material, Claire's journal is often invaluable. During the week in which Mary wrote that "nothing particular happens,"[14] Claire covered more than a page of her journal with an explanation of the "curious adventure" between Shelley and the police in Como when the officers mistook Shelley's attempt to clean his pistol for a suicide intent.[15] It is easy to understand why Shelley's biographers have quoted in about the same proportion from Claire's journals as from Shelley's and Mary's.

After an extensive examination of English diaries, Arthur Ponsonby decided upon seven qualities which he considered the most important components of a good diary:

> . . . daily writing, powers of observation and of perception, honesty so far as it is possible, a fair quantum of egotism, no immediate thought of publication, no pretensious attitudinizing and no hesitation to put down the things that ruffle and the things that please in the twelve hours that have passed--a certain amount of recklessness in fact--will help to make a good diary.[16]

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[13] Ashley MSS., 8 April 1818.

[14] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 96.

[15] Ashley MSS., 18 April 1818.

[16] English Diaries (London, 1923), p. 35.

There are qualities not covered by this list which make Claire's journals interesting and valuable today, such as their contribution to Shelley biography; but these seven points are unquestionably significant and provide a convenient approach to an evaluation of any bona fide diary. It is interesting to examine Claire's journals in their light.

For the most part Claire did, when she was keeping a journal at all, make regular daily entries each night before she went to bed. This habit gives a spontaneous quality--an unpremeditated freshness--to most of her remarks, particularly in the 1814 journals. While crossing the Alps or travelling down the Rhine, at the most strenuous points in her travels, Claire completed her account of the day's adventures before retiring for the night. Indeed, many of her entries sound as though she had been writing them during the day while she was on the road:

> Saturday Aug. 27th Get up at five Bustle toil & trouble--Most laughable to think of our going to England the second day after we entered a new house for six months--All because the stove don't suit. As we left Dover & England's white cliffs were retiring I said to myself I shall never see these more--& now I am going to England again--dear England After having travelled & viewed the follies of other nations my own country appears the most reasonable & the most enlightened. It is now six o'clock We shall set off in a moment. What will the Abbé and the Medecin say? I should like to know what a Pack Horse is? Shelley explains this phenomenon at one o'clock in the boat. Set off at seven. Ra[iny] Morning. Very uncomfortable. The clouds only just above our head--We pass through one. Stop under a shed for half an hour--Mont Pilate almost hid by thin white clouds. Reach Lucerne about half after twelve--Go to the Cheval. Read King Richard III. & King Lear. [Here follow Claire's account of her "horrors" at reading these plays and a sentence beginning "Go to Bed

> after . . .," crossed out and partially illegible.] In a fortnight we shall perhaps be in London--How wild people will think us--All because the stove did not burn rightly & there were too many Cottages.[17]

This kind of hour-by-hour reporting results in the kind of a diary which re-creates the day with dramatic vividness. In her early journals Claire often wrote with a spontaneity which she later came to regret. The frequent crossed-out passages reveal her mature doubts about the propriety of her youthful effusions. Usually the original entry is still legible and bears witness more to the extreme reserve of the older woman than to the impropriety of the girl. As Claire continued her journal keeping she lost much of the day-to-day freshness of her first diaries. When travelling, she came to drop her journal and to summarize afterwards the days of less orderly life. The infrequency of daily entries in the 1818 journal is due to this tendency. The result is not necessarily a loss. The lengthy summaries, written while the events were still fresh in her mind, provided an opportunity for a more fully developed commentary than she ever included in her daily entries at that time. But even the best of her later passages do not equal in dramatic effectiveness the less neatly composed records of the first journals, which bring the reader into a closer proximity with the events of her life than any other medium.

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[17] Ashley MSS., 27 August 1814.

Claire's powers of observation and perception, her ability to select and to record the most significant details, were at times remarkably keen. The re-creation of vivid occurrences in her journals makes them of potential interest to the social historian and to any reader interested in nineteenth century life. An excellent example is her account of the death and funeral of her pupil Dunia in Russia.[18] Her descriptive style is illustrated in her journal entry which describes a trip with the Ricci girls to see the founding of a steamboat cylinder in Leghorn. Claire was particularly interested in the process, since Henry Reveley had supervised a similar ceremony eight months before, in November of 1819, as a part of the steamboat project in which Shelley had a financial interest.[19] Claire was apparently more interested in the spectacular and human than in the strictly mechanical side of the operation:

> It was nine in the evening. The building was composed of massy walls with holes cut for windows; the floor was of earth and many opening [sic] led to apartments of the same kind which seemed however buried in darkness--The whole place had the appearance of the recesses of some cavernous mountain for on the broken & unequal surface of the walls above the weeds were shaking in the night air. Only a small space was

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[18] Partially quoted in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, pp. 183-184.

[19] Henry Reveley wrote to Mary Shelley, 10 November 1819: "I am now writing on the eve of a great event for me, the casting of the cylinder--as the clay moulds are quite ready; the preliminary ceremonies will be performed tomorrow night, and the casting will take place the next evening--this is the first cylinder of such a size cast in Italy."--Abinger MSS. Henry's project proved abortive.

> illumined by the furnace from a small aperture of which flames of golden air seemed to issue for the fire was of wood & it produces this effect when heated to any extraordinary degree. In the middle of the flames the liquid metal lay like a lake over which misty clouds hover--red-bright, glowing with intensity of colour when it was allowed to run into the form it appeared like one of the brightest lava rivers of Vesuvius. I was extremely delighted--The flames enlightened the countenances of the workmen & such others as came like myself as a spectator. The muscular forms & the dark hair & skin of the Italians looked picturesque seen by the intermitting burst of flame. Close to me a Jew was leaning against a projection of broken wall--his short features with the peculiar cast of the Jewish eye I saw by fits--The director of the foundry was a Priest who every now & then stirred the liquid metal with large brands of wood upon which the Jew observed "Such will be his employment in Hell, replenishing the fire under the souls of the dammed [sic]. On my other side was a little french woman who in a soft voice excused herself from coming forward to see the progress of the founding by saying that "ce n'etait pas pour voir qu'elle venoit mais pour la societè."[20]

The third quality valued by Ponsonby in a diarist is a reasonable degree of honesty. In Claire's journals there is never after 1814 the complete candor of the early diary, but the difference is in an increasing reserve rather than anything that could be described as dishonesty. In her later years Claire went through her journals inking out entries that had come to seem indiscreet--references to Allegra, to reading in Boccaccio or the memoirs of Madame de Pompadour, and too atheistical sentiments, for example. Perhaps she also excised pages or destroyed whole volumes. Despite this obvious change in attitude, however, Claire never, so far as can be seen, altered or re-wrote anything she had written in

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[20] Ashley MSS., 22 July 1820.

her youth, and there is no evidence that so much as a word was ever added at a later date.[21] Although letters and reminiscences dating from Claire's middle years and old age can be shown to be inaccurate, perhaps more from weak memory and wishful thinking than from dishonesty, no entry in all of her journals, which extend irregularly from 1814 to 1826, has appeared in any way to misstate the facts as Claire saw them when she was writing. Her only sin as a diarist is of omission. One could wish that the pall of reticence had not settled over her journal writing at such an early date.

"A fair quantum of egotism" Claire certainly possessed.[22] She was of an introspective nature, and examined everything about her in the light of her own feelings. In describing the foundry she is as much interested in recording her own reaction to the scene as she is in preserving a record of an interesting mechanical process. Although references to current events dot her journal, she never described any of them in great detail, and her accounts of her personal reactions to her reading or sight-seeing are more extensive and much more interesting than her comments on the comings and goings of the King of Naples or the movements of the Austrian troops.

The fifth criterion of excellence in a diarist is no immediate thought of publication. There is no evidence that

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[21] The one exception to this is the Pforzheimer variant.

[22] This point has been discussed above, pp. 232-233.

Claire intended to see her journal published in the form in which she was writing it. Had she nourished any such idea she would probably not have included in her diary such intimate details as the regularly recurring X's. In one way her diaries have the sort of immediacy and unguarded frankness that characterize personal journals never intended for the eye of another. On the other hand, it is clear that Claire had some notion of drawing on her notebooks at a later time for material for books and articles. The extended anecdotes, like the long accounts of stories told by Lady Mountcashell, the suggestions for possible essays, like the "Hints for Don Juan," and the rough drafts of criticisms and character sketches, like the caricatures of Shelley and Byron, seem all to point toward some intention of publishing. Indeed, they really do constitute something that may be classed as literary output in a more formal sense than the remainder of the journals.

It is impossible to generalize about Claire's journals as a whole in attempting to evaluate them by Ponsonby's standards. His sixth demand is for an unhesitating record of pleasing and disturbing things in each day, free from "pretentious attitudinizing." In this respect Claire may be said to have regressed from very very good to only moderately satisfactory. Every little up and down is reflected in the 1814 diary, which runs the gamut from elation to sullen remorse. In the 1820 entries there is more reserve about personal

reactions, but "Much Laughter" sometimes breaks through, or irritation: "we met the Rev^{d}. Colonel Finch--a sight I did hope never to see more."[23] By the time she is in Russia, Claire's journal, though still reflecting the light or shadow of her personal emotional reactions, has lost nearly all the ingenuousness which was its charm in 1814. The entries ressembled lengthy essays on life, friendship, and the weather, and they show frequent signs of attempted revision at the time of their composition. The natural effect of this increased self-consciousness is that very pretentiousness to which Ponsonby specifically objects. There is a semi-literary cast to each meditation:

> I can compare the beauty of Summer to nothing but a prodigal, who lavishes /throws/ his gifts in abundance everywhere, and showers down his wealth upon everyone around him. Winter on the contrary to a wretched miser who puts on the most forbidding aspect and shuts up his riches in his own bosom.[24]

There may be a direct correlation between the spontaneity of Claire's writing and her consciousness of a potential audience for the observations as she was recording them. There is much in the early journals which would have been meaningful and significant to no one but Claire herself, but the Russian journals sound as though they might have been written to provide an account for Mary, Jane Williams, and Trelawny of her

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[23] Ashley MSS., 13 February 1820.

[24] Ashley MSS., 16 [o.s.], 28 [n.s.] May 1825.

long months far from her friends. Her thoughts are ordered and there is a craving for sympathy running occasionally through them which reminds the reader of the same strain in Claire's letters to these friends. By the time she reached old age Claire certainly had no objection to her existing journals' being passed on to posterity or she would certainly have destroyed them.

Although the inclusion of rough essays and critiques may not in theory represent good diary-writing practice, these semi-formal passages represent one of the interesting aspects of Claire's journal, sometimes because of their native vivacity,[25] and sometimes because of the light they cast upon Claire's views of Byron and Shelley. In the spring of 1820, when she was both writing and reading intensively, she recorded her "Thoughts concerning Reviewers":

> 1st they write for sale--2nd they criticize in half an hour what has perhaps taken its writers three years to consider. Reviewers are generally disappointed authors; they retire to the bridge of Criticism and their endeavors go to catch every passing author & by throwing him into the deep & rapid river of abuse that flows below to destroy him & his immortality--Job their first parent who in the bitterness of his disappointment cried out _Oh! that mine enemy had written a book!_ Moral ProcrustOeses who measure every man by their own Grubstreet Bed, and what is wanting they will stretch him too, that exceeds they cut off thus disabled they dismiss their _protegès_ to limp through the world.[26]

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[25] Examples of some of these anecdotes are quoted in Grylls, _Claire Clairmont_, pp. 117-120.

[26] Ashley MSS., 7 April 1820. This passage may very well reflect opinions which Claire had heard from Shelley.

When she herself came to discuss Shelley and Byron, however, she did not hesitate to become herself a moral Procrustes and to apply her own standards, both literary and personal, with a certain degree of ruthlessness.

Byron provides the best example of a writer criticised at length by Claire in her journal. Early in 1820 she undertook a work referred to as "Don Juan." The first of her many notes for this study is found on 1 February 1820: "Hints for Don J-- --which appears to me a soliloquy upon his own ill-luck--Ungraceful & selfish--like a beggar hawking his own sores about and which create disgust instead of Pity."[27] It appears that the original intent of the work was literary criticism, but the admixture of intense personal distaste is strong throughout. That the much-quoted caricature of Byron was intended as part of Claire's "Don Juan" is evidenced by the couplet, an early "Hint for Don Juan,"

> I'll kiss the lips & break the Pate
> Of the maid I love & the man I hate,

which two months later appears as part of the caricature.[28] A less familiar example of the extended critiques which Claire occasionally incorporated into her journal is a discussion of Byron which was undoubtedly intended to form a part of the

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[27] Ashley MSS.

[28] Ashley MSS., 3 September 1820.

"Don Juan" study:

> He ne'er is crown'd
> With immortality who fears to follow
> Where airy voices lead.[29]

> It is for this reason that I think L.B.'s poetry will not immortalize him; it is as entirely divested of any thing pertaining to the aerial voice of imagination, so sensual, so tangible that like every thing corporeal, it must die. His song is woven of the commonest & grossest elements of our Nature; desire, hatred revenge, a proneness to mischief spoliation & cruelty, the description of these animal appetites, interspersed here and there with an appeal to freedom which however a marked animosity to philosophy & virtue renderes null and void form both the groundwork & superstructure of this Poets work. They are pictures of animal life of the sensations which belong to the robust body of a savage whose senses bear a most immoderate preponderance in the sum total of his being. It is a measurement of the body of Man; there is so much of leg & so much of thigh, hands feet &tc in proportion without a sign of the lord & master of the mansion, the soul. This poet's hand seems to [sic] heavy to paint the subtle motions of the invisible inhabitant whose etherial emanations create the grace and the poetry of life. Again we repeat his poetry is the poetry of the body and the poetry of the body is to the poesy of the soul, what prose is by the side of poetry. Prose is the language of every day life: it is used by lawyers, cooks, dancing masters & courtiers: it expresses our wants, our sicknesses, our crimes & our follies: it is dedicated to the service of this part of us which is destined to the grave. Poetry however has been throughout the long age of the world, the ornament, the song, the music of humanity: it has more particularly been the handmaid of the immortal sojourner on Earth the soul, writing to celebrate the inspirations of this mysterious power which to become visible to man assumes the shape of noble actions, as the mute Eolian strings wait for the brething wind ere they swell into music; so poetry bursts into harmony inspired by mental perfection.[30]

This passage, of which only the first part is quoted here, illustrated the dominant characteristics of Claire's criticism

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[29] The quotation is from Keats, Endymion, II, 211-213.

[30] Ashley MSS., 15 April 1821.

as it is found in her journals. The formal rhetoric ("Again we repeat . . .") indicates unquestionably her intention to present her essay to a general audience. Her interest is in judging by the most general standards possible; she seems more concerned with abstract critical theory ("etherial emanations," "grace and poetry of life," "mute Eolian strings," etc.) than with the direct analysis and evaluation of any particular poem. There is nowhere, here or throughout the journals, any direct critical reference to any line or canto or scene in any poem. When, in her "Reminiscences of Past Life," Claire discussed Queen Mab, she wrote about it against a background of the age in which it appeared, not in any concrete literary terms. Her theories were clearly derived from Shelley, and although they provided her with a brilliantly idealistic perspective of the literary art, they did not assist her to find any objective critical standards by which she could transcend her personal biases.

Since part of the function of a journal is to record the whole person, complete with those biases as well as the more positive qualities, the reader welcomes the extended anecdotes and essays along with their more informal matrix of the diaries. The over-all effect of the journals is to present a vivid and significant picture of Claire herself, her friends, and her environment. Even for one not primarily interested in the people with whom she was associated the journals present through a large part of their length an interesting

account of a nineteenth century life.

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If Henry Tilney's comments to Catherine Morland are to be believed, there is a decided connection between the arts of journal keeping and letter writing:

> "My dear madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me. It is this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must have been essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal."
>
> "I have sometimes thought," said Catherine, doubtingly, "whether ladies do write so much better letters than gentlemen. That is, I should not think the superiority was always on our side."
>
> "As far as I have had opportunity of judging it appears to me that the usual style of letter-writing among women is faultless, except in three particulars."
>
> "And what are they?"
>
> "A general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar."[1]

In Claire Clairmont's writing there seems to exist the correlation which Mr. Tilney noticed between the forms, but without the three damning deficiencies. Claire's twelve years of journal writing were in a way an apprenticeship to a

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[1] Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey, chapter 3.

life-long epistolary career; of the 167 known letters in her hand, only fifty-two, all but fourteen to Byron, were written at a period when she was keeping a journal. Perhaps after 1826 Claire found in writing letters the same satisfaction of self-expression which had previously been realized in her diary entries.

At only two periods in her life did Claire's letters fail to please their recipients; in 1818 Byron informed her that her letters were like bad German novels,[2] and in 1875 Trelawny qualified his praise of her writing with an objection to the "German sickly sentiment and exaggeration and eulogy."[3] Between these extremities of her life, however, Claire was much admired and appreciated as a letter writer. Trelawny begged in 1837 for one of her "long flighty fanciful beautiful letters."[4] Mary Shelley repeatedly told Claire how much she admired her ability. In 1842 she wrote:

> . . . you write the most amusing & clever letters in the world--I mean this au pied de la lettre--If your letters are ever published, all others that ever were published before, will fall into the shade, & you be looked on as the best

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[2] "I do not know what you mean by saying that my letters are bad German novels--they may well be bad, and it is my daily fear that they may become worse."--Claire to Byron, 27 April 1818, Murray MSS.; quoted in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 236.

[3] Letters, p. 247.

[4] Ibid., p. 205.

> writer that ever charmed their friends--Is this glory? Will it please you? At any rate do write as often as you can. I am so delighted always to get your letters.[5]

Claire nevertheless sometimes apologized for her style. "My letter like a portrait has had at least ten sittings which instead of giving it a high finish has broken in upon the style completely," she told Mary in one letter in 1826.[6] Ten years later she echoed the same sentiment. Her letters, she said--

> . . . are stuffed full of opinions as an egg of meat. I jabber away as if I were talking to myself and had no fear of shocking the principles of any listener; I roam right and left, catch an idea from the North, tack it on to one from the South, join the East to the West in jarring conclusion, mix the sun and moon together if it suits me, and all this with the swiftness of the wind. My mind when it once begins to work goes at the rate of five hundred miles a minute like the spectre horse in Burger's Leonora. the production is--a pile of books muddled up together, a whole library overturned and in disorder.[7]

This concern for structure and organization bespeaks a very serious and self-conscious letter-writer with a very strict set of standards, quite remote from the type of young lady

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[5] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 174. See also 7 July 1845: "Your letters are so amusing & clever that I thank you much for writing them--& am sorry that I send such stupid ones in return--but I never was a good letter writer & you always were."--Ibid., II, 244. And again; 29 December 1845: "I have just got your amusing letter (no one writes such good letters as you do). . . I have not the art of letter writing--You have to an eminent degree."--Ibid., II, 261.

[6] Abinger MSS., 2[o.s.], 14[n.s.] May [1826].

[7] Abinger MSS., 6 November 1835.

referred to by Henry Tilney.

Perhaps Mary had hit upon part of the secret of Claire's conspicuous success in this field when she spoke of the possibility of publication. If Claire did indeed consider her letters a substitute for a frustrated literary career her great care with their composition is understandable. Certainly she realized that Mary and Jane both treasured her letters and showed them to one another, and the possibility of their eventual publication might have occurred to her. Perhaps their high quality was due in part to a dream of glory; perhaps it can be accounted for simply by innate literary ability and sense of form augmented by the sheer necessity of communication with those friendly spirits from whom she was almost always separated. The fact remains that Claire did write excellent letters, many of them entirely worthy of publication.

An amusing treatise upon the art of letter writing, and one which Claire certainly knew, appeared in the third number of The Liberal.[8] The virtuosity of its punning and the references to the delights of having recently escaped from England proclaim it to be from the pen of Leigh Hunt. After comically dismissing the letters of merchants and maid-servants, love letters and hate letters, he arrived at the type he much preferred--letters from a friend:

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[8] (London, 1823), pp. 333-343.

> . . . the letter must have been long on the road, must be stamped with a foreign post-mark, to make it precious; or with an English stamp, to him who is called the "foreigner," wherever he travels away from his endeared associates. It is enough to make sweet the pain of actual banishment. Let those who live out of their own country describe, if they can, the emotion they feel as they burst the seal of such a letter.[9]

Such was the nature of the correspondence exchanged between Claire, usually the "foreigner," and Mary and Jane at home over a period of many decades.

Most of Claire's qualities as a letter writer can be illustrated in two representative letters to Mary, both written from Italy, one on 25 September 1833 and the other on 9 March 1834; but all of the arts which make these letters delightful are found throughout the entire range of her correspondence.[10]

In content and organization Claire's letters strike the happy medium between the two extremes attacked by Hunt in his essay: on the one hand, the writer who refers in such explicit detail to the letter which he is answering ("'Your account of' --'How delighted you must have been when'--"etc.) that he adds nothing new, and, on the other hand, the writer who is so self-important that he composes, not a letter, but "an intolerable essay."[11] Claire appears always to have had the letter which

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 340.

[10] These two letters are printed complete in Appendix . They will be referred to here as "Appendix G, I" and "Appendix G, II."

[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 341.

she is answering before her, for she commented directly upon what was said to her and answered all questions. Her reply to Mary's foreboding of death, for example, reassured Mary that her troubles were taken seriously and had come to rest upon the shoulders of a sympathetic friend.[12] The portion of Claire's letter which replies directly to the gloomy part of Mary's, however, is reasonably brief so that the final effect is bright and amusing and calculated to be cheering. Claire did not always open her letters with a direct reference to the one just received. Sometimes she began with something very like the formal essay to which Hunt objected. Her letter of 9 March 1834 begins with a brief humorous discussion of the ramifications of the expression "I have come to the conclusion," at the end of which she turns in the same tone to a matter unpleasant to Mary--the longevity of Sir Timothy Shelley.[13] The brief introduction had prepared the way for Claire's very gay and flippant treatment of that somewhat depressing subject; she sustains the artificiality of the essay technique just long enough to carry her over into the body of her letter. The effect is one of easy transition, diverting variety, and a pleasing proportion without excess in any part.

One cannot resist rejoicing that Claire did not unify and

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[12] Appendix G, I.

[13] Appendix G, II.

organize her letters as her own comments lead one to believe she would have liked. Had she pressed the sense of literary form any further she would indeed have fallen into Hunt's second classification--the essay writer posing as a correspondent. Claire's "jabber" as if she were talking to herself, which allowed her to turn with fluency from one fully-discussed subject to another, provides the variety so delightful in her letters but without any suggestion of flightiness. In the letter which opens with a discussion of Mary's foreboding,[14] Claire provided first a transition to more cheerful subjects: "I could talk my whole letter through upon this subject and never think I had said enough, but it would so disgust you it might very likely give you the Cholera and produce the result I want to guard against," and then a modulation in the form of a paragraph on Mary's troubles with her Aunt Everina (through a subject less depressing than the discussion of the cholera) into a much more cheerful matter--the Marchesa Jane Boccella. The body of the letter concerns their common interest in Trelawny and provides information which Mary had requested. The next part of the letter refers directly to Mary's and provides expanded discussions of some of the subjects which had been suggested by it; here Claire created the illusion of a prolonged conversation, both by references to Mary's letter and by suggestions for her

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[14] Appendix G, I.

next.[15] She discussed the Masons and their amusing prejudice, then turned to a light and rather charming comment on Byron and Augusta Leigh (free from the customary bitterness with which she generally mentioned Byron). In her next paragraph she assembled her requests. The last part of her letter led through the proper remarks about her family into a perfectly appropriate discussion of politics,[16] and finally, by a most reasonable thought-sequence, to a hilarious caricature of her employer's political and social attitude. The last paragraph of the letter contains the usual flurry of last minute comments and instructions, and it concludes, not with any formula ending, but with a spontaneous burst of affection. The whole letter has, indeed, joined east to west, ranged over a multitude of subjects, and is "stuffed full of opinions as an egg of meat." The effect is not, however, of a hodge-podge. The transitions are on the whole smooth and logical, and the letter as a whole presents a steady progress upward from the most desperately gloomy of subjects and moods to high-spirited

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[15] Mary often had difficulty in finding matter to fill her letters, but Claire's imagination was fertile; she not only overstuffed her own letters, but was prepared to suggest exactly what Mary might put in hers: "You say you cannot write to me because you don't know what to put in your letters . . ."--Appendix G, II.

[16] Leigh Hunt thought it probably best never to discuss politics in a letter, but Claire craved political discussions and carried them on so amusingly in her letters that had he known them, perhaps Hunt might have changed his mind about their place in correspondence.--_Op. cit._, pp. 341-342.

comedy, gaiety, and affection. It must certainly have produced a similar transformation in Mary as she read and reread it.

The "deficiency of subject" which Henry Tilney regretted in women's letters was never one of Claire's problems. Even when the matter she wished to discuss was slight, the natural flair for dramatically narrated anecdote and vivid description which enriched her journals lent significance to subjects which under another hand might appear inconsequential. Her description of Marie Ivanovna's horror at an innocent childish game appears significant as an incident representative of Russian life.[17] Rarely have the delights of young love and the felicities of a happy marriage been so vividly portrayed on the pages of any novelist as they are in Claire's account of Nerina Cini after her wedding.[18] When she turned her hand to a weightier subject, the accuracy and detail of her description produced a social document of real value. Her various accounts of the cholera epidemics which swept Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century provide a startling picture of the conditions which prevailed, even when she is not relying on her own personal experience:

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[17] Abinger MSS., 2[o.s.], 14[n.s.] May[1826]; quoted in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, pp. 181-182.

[18] Appendix G, II.

> At Leghorn it is terrible; half the doctors have escaped, so certain are they here that it is a contageous disorder. Here [Florence] and at Pisa we are crowded with Livornese, who have take refuge; all have fled who have a soldo to do it with. Betti, a first-rate physician and talented, writes from Leghorn that he is in despair, that he has tried every method and none succeeded. Punta, who has studied the disorder when it raged at Vienna, has also failed; he has what the Italians called fatto fiasco; his patients died so thick the populace fell upon him, and he fled Leghorn for his life. Poor Punta! he is so clever; if he cannot save, none can.[19]

In November the disease still raged, and the reports were of the kind which precipitate mass panic:

> . . . many and many an unfortunate patient was let to perish in the road sides, siezed [sic] by the disease as they were travelling to escape from it, and within sight of villas and cottages (for you know how populous is all Tuscany) was refused admittance or help of any kind, even so small as a glass of spirits or wine. Innumerable were the quantity buried before they were dead and as many those killed by immense doses of opium.[20]

The interest in Claire's letters does not lie in her varied organization and vivid content alone. During the large part of her letter writing career she controlled an individual, consistent, and interesting style. One of the chief qualities of this style is a vivacious colloquial approach which dramatizes ideas and interjects a conversational "tone of voice" into her writing. Her report of the conversation with Nerina about the whooping cough illustrated this dramatic

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[19] Abinger MSS., 16 September 1835.

[20] Abinger MSS., 6 November 1835.

vivacity.[21] In a letter to Jane Williams she similarly dramatizes the reaction which she imagined her letter might provoke: "I dress every day worse and worse. I think I see your horror. 'What, worse!" Dina asks, 'than when she was here?' Yes, a great deal worse. My gowns of that period were ball dresses to these I wear now."[22]

For all its colloquialism, Claire's style is literate and even sophisticated. A lively sense of the incongruous led her to make comedy about such subjects as Sir Tim or the possible fall of Saint Petersburg at the hands of "Sir Billy Somebody."[23] Some of her wit is verbal: "Here's another blessed effect of my mother's plots and plans; they turn into pots and pans and stew us in the fire of persecution."[24] Some of it arises from a semi-facetious sententiousness: "one might as well say that rattling two copper kettles together made lovely music, as say that two people of opposite sentiments can make love together."[25] Sometimes Claire fell back on pure sarcasm; of Madame Kaisaroff she said:

> The only conversation I hear is, first, the numberless perfections of herself, husband, and child; this, as it is true, would be well enough, but still upon repetition it tires;

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[21] Appendix G, II.

[22] Abinger MSS., 1 February 1833.

[23] Appendix G, II.

[24] Abinger MSS., 3 April 1830.

[25] Appendix G, I.

> second, the infinite superiority of Russia over all other countries, since it is an established truth that liberty and civilization are the most dreadful of all evils.[26]

Sometimes by a reckless exaggeration she produced the effect of a ridiculous situation. An example of this witty hyperbole is her description to Mary of her life in Nice with Natalie Kaisaroff:

> We had *dejeuners dansants*, *soirées dansantes* (*diners dansants* are considered *de trop* by order of the physicians), *bals parés*, *théâtres*, *operas*, *grands diners*, *petits soupers*, *concerts*, *visites de matin*, *promenades à ane*, *parties de campagne*, *réunions litteraires*, *grands cercles*, *promenades en bateau*, *coteries choisies*, *thunder storms* from the sea, and *political* storms from France; in short, if we had only an earthquake, or the shock of one, we should have run through the whole series of modifications of which human existence is susceptible.[27]

Claire was extremely competent in the use of balance and parallelism in her sentence structure. The epistolary patter song of the social life of Nice is an exaggerated example; her letters are generally built on such effectively constructed sentences as those which comprise the discussion of Mr. Bennet's Malthusianism.[28] None are so elaborate as to be inappropriate to the style of a familiar letter. Nowhere is there any monotony; no adjacent sentences are similarly constructed. A simple sentence like "I never saw a man so

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[26] Abinger MSS., 11 December 1830.

[27] Abinger MSS., 11 December 1830.

[28] Appendix G, I.

frightened at the populating power inherent in the human race" is followed by the compound-complex: "He does nothing but lament in the most direful strains the excess of population; to hear him, Italy, poor Italy is so crowded with human beings, there is not space left in it for one additional creature."

Perhaps the most effective of all the characteristics of Claire Clairmont's writing is her use of imagery. Just as she avoided the conventional openings and closings of the hackneyed epistolary style, she avoided nearly all temptations to express herself in the cliché. She described the relationship of Byron with Augusta Leigh, in which no idea was ever interchanged, as "a mute communication of matter with matter according to the law of attraction which draws two pieces of amber to one another without their being able to resist at all, poor things!"[29] Sometimes the comparisons are rather pretentious: "In our days life has become mere grist; the Universe is a great Mill and God the miller. He pours us in between the stones and grinds us down."[30] More often they are the flames of wit and imagination which transform the mysteries and miseries of life with humor, sometimes wry, sometimes good-natured: "Hell is paved with good intentions, perhaps heaven is paved with hearts and perhaps they are

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[29] Appendix C, I.

[30] Abinger MSS., 3 April 1830.

obliged to break them into chips to mac-adamize the roads."[31] Life, she discovered, was a cheat from beginning to end, but "in Death I have much more confidence; it is an ugly but honest creature, without tinsel or gauds, just appearing what it really is and deceiving no one."[32]

If indeed "le style est l'homme même," the vivacity and imagination which constituted the style of Claire's life transformed the monotony, discouragement, and disillusion which made up much of its subject matter into something rich, colorful, and above all interesting.

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[31] Abinger MSS., 16 September 1834.

[32] Appendix G, II.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT AND ELENA ADELAIDE SHELLEY

I am inclined to agree with Professor Cameron when he says that "the Neapolitan child must still be chalked up as a mystery, and the whole controversy has, it seems to me, been exaggerated out of proportion to its importance."[1] Nevertheless, in this same article Cameron infers "the need for further research and re-examination of the evidence" on this most controversial of Shelley problems.[2] At this point I must disagree. Whether or not one shares White's moral conviction that Claire was not the mother and Shelley not the father of Elena Adelaide, one must admit that in his Shelley the significant evidence has been fully and impartially displayed. The scholars who are quick to demand a further investigation are

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[1] "A New Shelley Legend," In An Examination of the Shelley Legend (Philadelphia, 1951), p. 110.

[2] Ibid., p. 113.

not so prompt in suggesting the quarter in which there are materials for further research. White himself continued his hunt for new evidence, but very little has come to light. For the sake of completeness I shall review here the minute body of new material and the few scraps of biographical data which I do not consider to have been adequately weighed in past discussions of the Neapolitan mystery.

According to her birth certificate, Elena Adelaide Shelley was born on 27 December 1818. An examination of Claire's life in the preceding months ought to provide some indication of whether or not she was an expectant mother. Marcel Kessel in a recent article has reached what he considers the "almost inescapable" conclusion that Claire could not have had a child in December, 1818.[3] In identifying the significance of the X's in Claire's journal, he believes that he has uncovered the missing link in the chain of White's evidence about the Neapolitan mystery. But on close examination, Kessel's evidence does seem to escape. Not only White but nearly every Shelley scholar before him who has had access to Claire's journals has either recognized the significance of Claire's monthly X's or has had it called to his attention. It was not a misguided

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[3] "The Mark of X in Claire Clairmont's Journals," PMLA, LXVI (December, 1951) 1180-1183. After an exchange of correspondence, Professor Kessel and I have come to a virtual agreement on this point. He recognizes the fact that nothing related to the mark of X constitutes proof, and he is quite right observing that if scholars have recognized the meaning of the X's they have not discussed this potentially significant evidence in their published works.

Victorianism which has led scholars to neglect this matter, but a recognition of the fact that the mark has no positive significance whatsoever in an understanding of the Neapolitan mystery. Between 13 April, the date of the last X before the birth of Elena Adelaide, and 22 March, the first such mark thereafter, Claire kept her journal irregularly. Between 26 April 1818 and 7 March 1819 there are no daily entries whatsoever. To overlook the nine-months gap before the birth of Elena Adelaide is as naïve as to attempt to prove anything by it.

When one has exhausted the study of Claire's biography in respect to the Neapolitan mystery there remains still another source of information. If Elise's story can be proved false in any one respect, the authority of the whole is weakened, even though nothing else positive or negative is proved. After the publication of his Shelley, White never ceased his investigation of Neapolitan sources. He examined the files of the Ospedale Annunziata, the only foundling hospital in Naples at the time that Shelley was there (copies of the files are in the library of Duke University), and he came to agree with the officials of the hospital that no child was deposited there or withdrawn by Shelley. With the addition of this last piece of evidence, inconclusive in itself except as it disproves a part of Elise's story, both Dr. White and Count Riccardo Filangieri, superintendant of the Archivo di Stato di Napoli, were convinced that the investigation had been carried

as far as possible at the Neapolitan end.[4]

Apologists for Byron have always choked on his ready acceptance of Elise's story. Nevertheless, his attitude is not inconsistent with his known readiness to spread slanderous and patently untrue stories about Claire (inexcusable, but understandable as an attempt to justify to others, and probably to himself as well, his callousness towards Claire and his eventual cruelty). As early as 29 September 1816, for example, Claire wrote to Byron: "Kinnaird says you told him I was an atheist and a murderer. You see the stupidity of people, so be chary of my name. A fine character I shall have among you all, when I am nothing but an innocent, quiet little woman, very fond of Albé."[5]

I do not think that a sexual union between Claire and Shelley would have been inconsistent with their principles, provided that they had been genuinely and deeply in love. I can find, however, no certain evidence that such a condition

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[4] There is evidence of Shelley's interest in the Italian institution of the Foundling Hospital in Medwin's Life: "He [Shelley] took me also to the Foundling Hospital where a hole in the wall admits at all hours the new born Babes, whom their Mothers commit to the Asylum--an admirable institution--and I remember his saying 'that it was a disgrace to our boasted civilization that no similar one should exist in London or our large Cities which he said would prevent a crime here unknown and there too common, Infanticide, originating in a sense of shame, and the inadequacy of means to support the fatherless offspring of prostitution.'"--Revised Life of Shelley, pp. 238-239.

[5] Murray MSS., partially published in Paston and Quennell, op. cit., p. 222.

ever existed. On the other hand, none of the materials I have here assembled can be construed as irrefutable proof that no such union took place. Nobody would be happier than I to see the Neapolitan mystery solved, but I do not see the promise of a solution either in a revaluation of the existing evidence or in the discovery of anything new in any source I can now think of. My only conclusion from the new factors here considered is that they all seem to support the "strong possibility" proposed by White in his Shelley.

Appendix B

LADY MOUNTCASHELL: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In Florence, in the midst of the bitterly cold January of 1820, Shelley, Mary, and Claire discussed on one day the possibility of going to Pisa, had Percy Florence "half-baptised" on the next, and on the third set off down the Arno, headed for the town which was to prove more congenial both in its climate and in the companionship it offered. Once settled in Pisa, Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt on 15 April:

> We see no one but an Irish lady and her husband, who are settled here. She is everything that is amiable and wise, and he is very agreeable. You will think it my fate either to find or to imagine some lady of 45, very unprejudiced and philosophical, who has entered deeply into the best and selectest spirit of the age, with enchanting manners, and a disposition rather to like me, in every town that I inhabit. But certainly such this lady is.[1]

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[1] Julian Works, X, 154. Shelley had just left Mrs. Gisborne, the companion of his Spanish reading, in Leghorn, and such another charming and intelligent lady had been Mrs. Boinville in London.

The Irish lady was the Countess Mountcashell, known in Italy as "Mrs. Mason," whom Shelley had met, probably for the first time, on 30 September 1819. But the ties which drew them together had been in the weaving for nearly a quarter of a century, and her friendship for the Shelleys, and particularly for Claire Clairmont, was to end only with her death.

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In 1773 when Margaret Jane King was born, her father, Viscount Kingsborough, the second earl of Kingston, was not yet twenty years old.[2] He had been married when only about fifteen in 1769 to his cousin, Caroline Fitzgerald. Caroline was a year younger than her husband and by the time she was sixteen had borne her first child, George, the heir to the title. This was in 1771. In 1773 she bore first Robert Edward and then her first girl, Margaret, who was in future years to be the Countess Mountcashell and Shelley's "Mrs. Mason." Seven children followed Margaret into the family--five girls: Caroline, Mary Elizabeth, Jane Diana, Louisa Eleanora, and Isabella Letitia; and two boys: Edward and Henry.

The family seat of the Kingstons was the Castle, at

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[2] This paragraph is based on G.E.C[okayne], *The Complete Peerage* (London, 1926), VII, 299-300; William Godwin, *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1927), pp. 163-164 and note; and the *Annual Register* (1799), p. 59.

Mitchelstown in County Cork. To it in 1786 came Mary Wollstonecraft as governess to the three oldest girls: Margaret, Mary Elizabeth, and Caroline. She was well-prepared for the position, having finished two years' teaching in the day school which she and Fanny Blood had set up, first in Islington and later in Newington Green. She was seriously interested in educational theory; her pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, had gone to the publisher before her departure for Ireland. Enthusiastic and confident, she was eager for every opportunity to work with children and to practice her theories. "No person," said Godwin, "was ever better formed for the business of education."[3]

Mary's introduction to the King children was nevertheless somewhat inauspicious. She preferred teaching in a school to being a governess because of the limitations placed on the employee of a family, and she feared the limited society with which she would be thrown in Ireland. She had succumbed finally to the forty pounds annual salary, which would help her to discharge her debts and to assist her sister Eliza. Her first impression on her arrival at the Castle was unpleasant: "The children are, literally speaking, wild Irish, unformed

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[3] Godwin, *op. cit.*, p. 32. Godwin's authority on the subject of education has, of course, been open to question. On hearing that he, in the full pride of his theory of perfectibility, had said he could educate tigers, Dr. Thompson once remarked, "I should like to see him in a cage with two of his pupils."--Thomas Moore, *Memoir, Journal, and Correspondence* (London, 1853), IV, 269.

and not very pleasing."[4] On the other hand, she found the Castle and the surrounding country-side with its cloud-capped hill to her liking, and later in the week she was able to write with real interest of her eldest charge, Margaret:

> I have committed to my care three girls, the eldest fourteen, by no means handsome, yet a sweet girl. She has a wonderful capacity, but she has such a multiplicity of employments it has not room to expand itself, and in all probability will be lost in a heap of rubbish, miscalled accomplishments. I am grieved at being obliged to continue so wrong a system. She is very much afraid of her mother,--that such a creature should be ruled with a rod of iron, when tenderness would lead her anywhere! She is to be always with me. . . . I intend visiting the poor cabins; as Miss K. is allowed to assist the poor, and I shall make a point of finding them out.[5]

Most of Mary Wollstonecraft's troubles in the household stemmed from her differences from Lady Kingsborough. Mary disapproved of early marriages, and probably saw a confirmation of her theories in the behavior of her employer.[6] Lady Kingsborough apparently did not think that her duties extended beyond the bearing and the disciplining of her children. After they left the nursery she arranged to see as little of

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[4] C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries, I, 186. A fuller account of Mary Wollstonecraft's career as governess to the King children, based on Abinger MSS. which I have not examined, is in Ralph Wardle, Mary Wollstonecraft (Lawrence, Kansas, 1951), pp. 60-82.

[5] Ibid., I, 186-187. From this last sentence one can visualize the beginnings of Margaret's later social and political liberalism.

[6] See her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (London, 1787), pp. 93-95.

them as was decently possible and visited them only on the most formal terms. Rather than attempt to supply the tremendous care and affection which they would demand, she lavished that attention of which she was capable on a pack of pet dogs. Such a flagrant perversion of natural affection from its normal expression into baby-talk and the pampering of house dogs, while the children were running wild, was incomprehensible to Mary. Her first impressions were to be lasting. "Lady K. is a shrewd, clever woman, a great talker," she whote to her sister Everina shortly after she was settled in Ireland:

> I have not seen much of her, as she is confined to her room by a sore throat; but I have seen half a dozen of her companions, I mean not her children, but her dogs. To see a woman without any softness in her manners caressing animals, and using infantine expressions is, you may conceive, very absurd and ludicrous, but a fine lady is a new species to me of animals.[7]

The children had been suffering under a variety of restrictions imposed by their mother, and when Mary first began to work with them they were understandably rebellious and constantly conspiring for forbidden fruit. They were armed with

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[7] Paul, _op_. _cit_., I, 185-186. Other letters bear out this picture of an unsympathetic relationship between Mary and Lady Kingsborough. On 5 November she wrote to her sister Eliza Bishop, "Lady K. is very civil, nay, kind, yet I cannot help fearing her." On 17 November she wrote to Everina: "Lady K's passion for animals fills up the hours which are not spent in dressing. All her children have been very ill--very disagreeable fevers. Her ladyship visited them in a formal way, though their situation called forth my tenderness, and I endeavoured to amuse them, while she lavished awkward fondness on her dogs. I think I can now hear her infantine lisp. . . . I am almost tormented to death by dogs."--_Ibid_., I, 187-188.

antagonism for a new governess, accustomed as they were to their former instructors, who had been merely a higher form of servant, carrying out orders from their mother. The girls, Mary found, had learned several languages and read "cartloads of history," but were completely unrefined. She sailed into this problem situation with one tremendous advantage which her predecessors had not shared: she was accepted in the household as a social equal, not as a hireling, and made friends with the guests (one of whom was horrified to discover that she had squandered her evening's attention on what turned out to be a mere governess). She accompanied Lady Kingsborough to balls and parties and jaunts to the country and to English resorts. She was allowed to exercise her own discretion completely in dealing with the children, and she was therefore free from the frustration, which embittered so many governesses, of having her every discipline or indulgence countermanded by the parents.

On her arrival at Mitchelstown, Mary immediately removed the restrictions, both in reading and in other respects, and set out to apply her favorite theory that children are best governed by the affections. Some idea of how this was to work can be gained from a reading of Mary's Original Stories from Real Life, which was published in London in 1788 and grew directly out of her experience with the King children. It can be read as an idealized picture of Mary's relations with her young charges.

The central character in the book is a Mrs. Mason, governess to two girls: Mary, fourteen, and Caroline, twelve. It is difficult today not to share the disgust of the tales' modern editor, E. V. Lucas, for the insufferable smugness and unyielding righteousness of Mrs. Mason and for the unrelentingly didactic tone of the stories themselves. But they certainly did not have this effect upon Margaret King, who years later adopted the name of the governess as her own in a gesture of tribute to her youthful ideal of tenderness and wisdom.

It is possible that Mrs. Mason would appear a more lovable character to a person who was able to superimpose on the rather stern outlines in the book the gentler picture of Mary Wollstonecraft herself, a person "of active humanity, exquisite sensibility, and endearing qualities of heart."[8] Mrs. Mason's display of affection in the _Original Stories_ is extremely reserved. "Now, said she, we will return to breakfast; give me your hands, my little girls, you have done good this morning, you have acted like rational creatures." This is the extent of the reward: the friendly hand and occasionally the single "kiss of peace." The most effective discipline is the withdrawal of these tokens: "It was one of Mrs. Mason's rules, when they offended her, that is, behaved improperly, to treat them civilly; but to avoid giving them

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[8] Mary Hays , _Monthly Magazine_, IV (September, 1797), 232-233.

those marks of affection which they were particularly delighted to receive."[9] The restraint which dominated these tales is particularly significant when one comes to evaluate Margaret's own restrained relations later with her own children.[10]

It has been charged that Mary Wollstonecraft poisoned the minds of her pupils with "immoral" and "atheistical" teachings. Thomas Sadleir attempted to explain what seemed to him to be Lady Mountcashell's painfully unconventional ideas by her education under the "gifted but godless Mary Wollstonecraft."[11] But Mary's stay was anything but a period of indulgence and license, and her moral and religious convictions would at that time have satisfied the most piously conservative. Her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters stressed religious training throughout its pages, and she dedicated an entire chapter to the evils of Sabbath-breaking.

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[9] Original Stories from Real Life (London, 1906), pp. 5, 18.

[10] See below, pp.362-363. It is interesting to speculate about what Blake, who only a few years before had written "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" and "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction," thought when he came to illustrate Mary's volume, in which neither the spontaneous gaiety of the "Songs of Innocence" nor the rebellious genius of the "Songs of Experience" is encouraged. Perhaps the British matron personified in Mrs. Mason was transformed for him by Mary's radiant personality, much as the aged harper in one of her tales is transformed in his illustration into a youth of angelic beauty.

[11] In the introduction to Catherine Wilmot, An Irish Peer on the Continent, p. vii.

This side of her relationship with her pupils is made clear in the last chapter of the Original Stories:

> Avoid anger; exercise compassion; and love truth. Recollect that from religion your chief comfort must spring, and never neglect the duty of prayer. Learn from experience the comfort that arises from making known your wants and sorrows to the wisest and best of Beings, in whose hands are the issues, not only of this life, but of that which is to come.
>
> *
>
> You are now candidates for my friendship, and on your advancement in virtue my regard will in future depend. Write often to me, I will punctually answer your letters; but let me have the genuine sentiments of your hearts.[12]

Mary's friendly bid for the affection and respect of her students was almost too successful. The contrast with their former instruction was dramatic. The children became so attached to her that one of the younger girls tactlessly cried herself sick at the prospect of spending some time in the country alone with her mother.[13] Lady Kingsborough became jealous in exact proportion to Mary's success as a governess, and eventually she found that she could dispense with her services. As Mary explained in a letter to Everina, "The regret Margaret showed, when I left her for a short time, was Lady K.'s pretext for parting with me."[14]

The mother's irritation with the governess who displaced

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[12] P. 87.

[13] Paul, op. cit., I, 190.

[14] Ibid., I, 191.

her in her children's affections is certainly understandable, but the dismissal of their dearly-loved companion was scarcely the most effective means of returning their affection to herself. In a few years Caroline, countess of Kingston, abandoned her husband and the whole brood of youngsters and remained separated from them for the rest of her life. She lived completely cut off from them all until her death at the age of sixty-eight on 13 January 1823.[15]

Long after Mary Wollstonecraft had left Ireland her influence was felt, particularly in the life of her favorite pupil, Margaret. A correspondence was initiated, and her "advancement in virtue" was more than adequate for admission to the roster of Mary's friends. Writing to her publisher, Johnson, in 1788, Mary said: "I had, the other day, the satisfaction of again receiving a letter from my poor, dear Margaret.--With all a mother's fondness I could transcribe a part of it." She continued in a vein which revealed how much she herself needed the affection which was the keystone of her educational system: "She says, every day her affection to me, and dependence on heaven increases, &c.--I miss her innocent caresses--and sometimes indulge a pleasing hope, that she may be allowed to cheer my childless age--if I am to

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[15] Annual Register (1799), p. 52; and G.E.C.[okayne], op. cit., VII, 299.

live to be old."[16] Mary herself was never to need this consolation, but her little Margaret was to grow up to cheer and assist Mary's daughter and her family in many ways.

ii

Margaret King soon had a family of her own to bring up and a practical opportunity to try out the theories of her beloved governess and friend. In 1791, on 12 September at Mitchelstown, she married Stephen Moore, the second Earl Mountcashell, three years her senior. In later life her son reported that she had settled down to married life after a mild flirtation with Counsellor Bushe, who was afterward Chief Justice, and that her marriage was solely for position.[1] Indeed, the most generous reader is at a loss to discover any other motive for her marriage. There is no scrap of evidence that she was in love, and she could hardly have found a man less congenial in interests. He was all out of sympathy with the Irish revolutionaries, particularly after the burning of his beautifully-situated home on the banks of the Liffey, Mount Cashell Lodge. His distaste for politics grew apace. As a Representative Peer he sat on the Tory side, but in 1799

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[16] Posthumous Works of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women, IV, 69.

[1] Wilmot, op. cit., introduction, pp. vi-vii. Cave! This introduction contains a considerable amount of misinformation. See below, p. 379, note 14.

he sold at an undervalue his patronage of the Borough of Clonmel, for which his family had long retained two members. His interests centered around his estate, Moor Park, near Kilworth in County Cork, and he would have been perfectly content to pass the whole of his life there, devoting his time to the improvement of agricultural methods. But this was not at that time his wife's idea of a valuable existence.

In spite of what might appear to have been a rather rigorous program of childbearing (she had seven children by Lord Mountcashell),[2] Lady Mountcashell carried on an active life during the years of her marriage. She espoused passionately and idealistically the cause of the United Irishmen, and counted several of their leaders among her personal friends.

Some account of this colorful but doomed revolutionary movement, which so stirred Shelley, is necessary to a full understanding of the woman Mary Wollstonecraft's student had

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[2] Stephen, third Earl Mountcashell, F.R.S., a representative peer, born 20 August 1792, died 1883; the Honourable Robert Moore, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Cold-Stream Guards, severely wounded at Waterloo, born 1793, died 1856 unmarried; the Honourable and Reverend Edward George Moore, Canon of Windsor, Rector of West Ilsley, Berks., born 1798, died 1876; the Honourable Richard Francis Moore, with the East India Company, born 1802, died 1873 unmarried; Lady Helena Moore, married in 1813 Sir Richard Robinson, Bart.; Lady Jane Moore, married in 1819 the Right Honourable William Yates Peel, M.P.; and Lady Elizabeth Moore, who died unmarried.--G.E.C[okayne], op. cit., IX, 311-312, and Wilmot, op. cit., p. xix.

grown up to be.[3] The nucleus of the United Irishmen was the Irish Protestant revolutionary group, in existence before the American Revolution, more speculative than practical in its ultimate views, and bitterly opposed to Popery. At the time that this movement was taking shape, the Catholics were vigorously protesting the shockingly acute persecution they suffered under the English government. The crisis in America in 1776 and the consequent large demands upon the English resulted in some Catholic conciliation through a relaxation of the penal laws, but a great deal of discontent remained. In 1777 among the northern Presbyterians the Irish Volunteers arose--a self-officered, self-armed, and self-directed army demanding an incongruous program of equal and fair representation through Parliamentary reform, and at the same time a continuation of the Protestant ascendancy. It was an amazingly heterogeneous group, and it is not surprising that no immediate action came from it.

The French Revolution brought about the necessary change. Imbued with the principles of The Rights of Man, the real reformers were inspired to cast aside religious differences and to include all classes of men whatsoever in the blessings of constitutional freedom. The die-hard anti-Papists were dropped

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[3] The following account is based on R. R. Madden, "The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times," reprinted in The New World, 27 July 1842, extra numbers 11, 12, and 13, passim, and Thomas Moore, The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald (London, 1832).

out. The Republican party in Ulster, rather than be annihilated by this split, united with the discontented Catholics in the South, in Munster and Connaught, on equal terms for obtaining equal rights. So were the United Irishmen organized.

Their leader was the idealistic young attorney Theobald Wolfe Tone, and they numbered among their supporters many gentlemen, distinguished scholars, and churchmen. The names of Robert Emmett, John Curran, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who was Lady Mountcashell's particular friend, have not yet lost their glamour. But trouble was brewing early. The southern peasants had not the slightest interest in the "ideal republic" which appealed to the intellectuals and idealists of the North. Yet both groups felt that their success as a party depended of the aid of an army from France. They needed, yet desperately mistrusted, foreign interference.

The society as it was originally set up was intended expressly to obtain Parliamentary reform and the abolition of the penal code. Although both Tone and the first secretary of the meetings, Napper Tandy, were revolutionaries, the United Irishmen were not at the beginning a revolutionary party. But in 1794, riddled by government spies and by their own doubts, hesitations, and suspicions, the party was outlawed by the government and driven underground where it became a secret society of a more desperate nature. The original mild test oath was converted to an oath of secrecy and fidelity. Hesitation, timidity, and indecision drove the weaker

members from the party, and even the most enthusiastic, like their leader Tone, were haunted by a lurking fear.

Trials for high treason drew one after another of the members off to prison and frequently to the scaffold. For example, on 12 May 1794, a shoemaker named Thomas Hardy, who had been the founder and secretary of the London Corresponding Society, was arrested for high treason, and in the course of the week Godwin's friend John Horne Tooke, John Thelwall, and eight others were apprehended and imprisoned in the Tower or Newgate. Pitt demanded, and got, a suspension of the habeas corpus, and was vehemently supported by Burke. He was opposed by Grey, Fox, and Sheridan; and Godwin set to work so promptly as soon as the trial was announced that more than a week before the trials he was able to produce for the _Morning Chronicle_ "Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury." Treason trials were characterized by the precipitous speed with which they were carried through, and fast work was necessary. The pamphlet was immediately circulated throughout the land, and an acquittal resulted which was hailed as a glorious victory for reform.[4] In his sketch of Godwin in _The Spirit of the Age_, published in 1825, more than thirty years later, Hazlitt said that the pamphlet "would have raised any briefless barrister to the

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[4] Ford K. Brown, _The Life of William Godwin_ (London, 1926), p. 90 ff.; and George Woodcock, _William Godwin: A Biographical Study_ (London, 1946), pp. 111-112.

height of his profession," and quoted the anecdote of Horne Tooke's discovering the author of the treatise and kissing his hand, saying, "I can do no less for the hand that saved my life!"[5]

In all of this Lady Mountcashell was deeply interested. In later years she told long stories about her enthusiasm for the cause. On 13 February 1820, Claire walked with Mary and Shelley over to tea at Lady Mountcashell's Pisan house, Casa Silva, and in the evening recorded the following account in her diary:

> Curious stories of Lady Mountcashell. When she was young being a great admirer of freedom and an united Irishwoman she had a great passion for seeing all the extraordinary men of the day--She was in London at the trial of Hardy and the other eleven men for conspiracy to overturn the government. They were acquitted and shortly afterwards she walked into the city to Hardy's shop--She found only his wife there to whom she said that she came to order a pair of shoes as she had a great curiosity to see the man who had been acquitted on a charge of high treason. His wife said he would come presently and knocking Lady M on the arm she whispered, pointing to a little vulgar dirty man "there's another of them." When Hardy entered she said--"Are you not one of those who were committed to the Tower?" to which he replied with great calmness--"Yes I had that honor." This answer pleased her as daring to justify what he had dared to do--and she found him a good, straight forward man with great firmness and some understanding. She ordered a pair of shoes which she called for herself but she found them shockingly made pinching & galling her dreadfully so much that she took a hackney coach to his house. When she saw him she said--"Mr. Hardy I am very sorry for it but my feet are democratical and your shoes are aristocratical and they don't agree at all--Pray have the kindness to put them on the last for me." To this he agreed and when she returned for her shoes she found he had made her a new pair which tho' bad shoes did not hurt her in the wearing. Hardy would never

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[5] Centenary Edition, XI, 26 and 27n.

> receive any payment for either of the pairs and he was the more pleased at her frank acceptance of her present when asking her name he found her to be a Countess.[6]

On 26 February, after another evening at which the Shelleys were present, Claire recorded another of Lady Mountcashell's anecdotes about her revolutionary interests. Of Lord Edward Fitzgerald she said:

> When he was eighteen he was sent with the English Army to America--Some of his friends complimented him on the gallant manner in which he behaved being the first battle he was ever in--he said Ah! how much better I should have fought had I been on the other side![7]

Thomas Sadleir reports that Lady Mountcashell had incurred the suspicion of the government for her "extravagant political views" while living in Ireland. She made a point of seeking out those men whom she admired and helping them in any way she could. She was a particular friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who went to France to help prepare for the invasion of Ireland and on his return was fatally wounded while being arrested. It was Lady Mountcashell who, on hearing of the mishap (and hoping that his condition would improve), sent a messenger immediately to prevent the news from being carried to his wife at Moira House in Dublin.[8] Her friends were among Shelley's

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[6] Ashley MSS.

[7] Ashley MSS.

[8] Moore, Life and Death of Sir Edward Fitzgerald, II, 97. Lady Fitzgerald was the famous beauty, Pamela Sims, illegitimate daughter of Madame de Genlis and the Duke of Orleans.

heroes; Lord Edward was for him one of the martyrs to the "swinish multitude, the undiscriminating million."[9]

Lady Mountcashell's life contained in that same year (1798), one other appalling event indirectly connected with what Shelley styled the "liberticide war." Lady Mountcashell's sister Mary Elizabeth, the youngest of the three who had been under Mary Wollstonecraft's special care, formed an attachment with Colonel Henry Gerald Fitzgerald, an illegitimate son of her mother's brother. When the "seduction" was discovered, her younger brother, Robert Edward, fought an inconclusive duel with him, and the girl was packed off home to Ireland from her visit in England where the mishap had occurred. But Mary Elizabeth sent a note to her lover so warm as to tempt him to risk his life in an effort to carry off his lady. He was seen lurking near the Castle at Mitchelstown, and the brother dashed to Kilworth to hunt out the culprit. He burst into the room where Colonel Fitzgerald had locked himself, and both seized pistols. Lord Kingsborough arrived on the scene just in time to save the life of his son by a well-placed shot at the Colonel, who lost his life, "but not lamented", commented the Annual Register, "by anyone who has heard of his very dishonourable conduct in this affair."[10]

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[9] 7 May 1812, Julian Works, VIII, 322.

[10] The New Annual Register, 18 December 1797, pp. 175-176; and G.E.C[okayne], op. cit., VII, 299.

This was the year of the appearance of Godwin's Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Women, and several reviewers found in Mary Elizabeth's scandal good grist for their mill. The reviewer for the British Critic insinuated:

> Of her qualifications for the training of youth, her biographer is vehement in her praise, and mentions, with exaltation, 'the salutary effects of a new system of education,' which she introduced into this noble family. At least one of these effects, we will venture to say, is fresh in the memory of all our readers.[11]

This hardly seems a fair charge against the woman who had written just before she went as governess into Ireland, "Faith, with respect to the promise of eternal happiness, can only enable us to combat with our passions, with a chance of victory."[12] Mrs. Mason, in the Original Stories (the chapter on "The Inconveniences of Immoderate Indulgence") explains that "Providence, my child, has given us passions and appetites for various purposes--two are generally obvious, I will point them out to you. First to render our present life more comfortable, and then to prepare us for another, by making us sociable beings; as in society virtue is acquired, and self-denial practiced."[13] If Mary Elizabeth did not acquire virtue

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[11] "Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Women," The British Critic, XII (September, 1798), 230.

[12] Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, p. 130.

[13] Original Stories, pp. 38-39.

and practice self-denial, the blame can hardly be laid to her governess of ten years before.

The trial that followed as a result of the death of Colonel Fitzgerald gives one more insight into the family background of Lady Mountcashell. It brings her father to the center of the stage for the first time. Mary Wollstonecraft had had very little to say of him in the few of her letters which are available. "With his Lordship I have had little conversation, but his countenance does not promise more than good humour, and a little fun not refined."[14] By 18 May 1798, when he stood trial for murder before the House of Lords in Dublin, the good humour and "little fun" had turned to ashes. Although still a young man, only forty-four, he was in the last year of his life. The trial called forth a tremendous public interest: it was the first trial of a peer in living memory (and only the third in Irish history), and the first major governmental action after the recognition of Irish parliamentary independence. In many minds the trial marked the indisputable sovereignty of the Irish nation, although to Lady Mountcashell it was probably clear that Ireland had but a hollow mockery of "independence." Because of the size of the crowd, with a full muster of the peers, the trial was housed in the impressive Irish House of Commons, a perfect rotunda, with a gallery supported by columns and capable of

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[14] Paul, op. cit., I, 186.

seating seven hundred. One apartment of seats in the body of the house was covered with scarlet cloth, where the peeresses and their daughters sat, and it was from here that Margaret, Lady Mountcashell, undoubtedly watched the pageant which was to determine her father's fate. The impressive spectacle has been described by Lord Kingsborough's old friend Sir Jonah Barrington in his Personal Sketches:

> At length the peers entered, according to their rank, in full dress, and richly robed. Each man took his seat in profound silence; and even the ladies (which was rather extraordinary) were likewise still. The chancellor, bearing a white wand, having taken his chair, the most interesting moment of all was at hand, and its approach really made me shudder.
>
> Sir Chichester Fortescue, king-at-arms, in his parti-colored robe, entered first, carrying the armorial bearings of the accused nobleman emblazoned on his shield; he placed himself on the left of the bar. Next entered Lord Kingston himself, in deep mourning, moving with a slow and melancholy step. His eyes were fixed on the ground; and, walking up to the bar, he was placed next to the king-at-arms, who then held his armorial shield on a level with his shoulder.
>
> The supposed executioner then approached, bearing a large hatchet with an immense broad blade. It was painted black, except within about two inches of the edge, which was of bright, polished steel. Placing himself at the bar on the right of the prisoner, he raised the hatchet about as high as his lordship's neck, but with the shining edge averted; and thus he remained during the whole of the trial. The forms, I understood, prescribed that the shining edge should be averted until the pronouncing of judgement, when, if it were unfavourable, the blade was instantly to be turned by the executioner toward the prisoner, indicating at once his sentence and his fate.
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> I could not reconcile my mind to the thought of such a consummation. I knew the late Lord Kingston, and had a high regard for him; and hence I felt a very uneasy sensation,

inasmuch as I was profoundly ignorant of what would be the termination of this awful scene.[15]

Thrice the call was made for witnesses for the prosecution, but none appeared. The bishops claimed their old exemption of voting on matters of life and death, and the peers voted unanimously for acquittal. Lord Clare, the Lord Chancellor, broke his white wand, and the trial was over.[16]

The trial might, however, have had a quite different ending. Apparently Lord Edward Fitzgerald, at a secret meeting of the United Irishmen, had suggested that the Chancellor and the peers might be attacked while they were all under one roof for the trial and the government taken over at once. The plan was vetoed by one vote, Dublin was spared a bath of blood, and the tide which might have been taken at the flood began to ebb.[17] By the next night Lord Edward had been apprehended, and the rebellion, when it finally occurred, bloody as it was, was abortive after too long a gestation of mistrust and indecision. The final result was the Act of Union in 1800.

Lady Mountcashell's horror and her conflicting loyalties during this period cannot be overestimated. As she was a revolutionary and a friend of the common people, her sympathies

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[15] Sir Jonah Barrington, Personal Sketches of His Own Times (New York, 1854), pp. 130-131.

[16] W. E. H. Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1890), VIII, 40.

[17] Ibid., VIII, 40-41 and note.

were strongly with Lord Edward and his political friends. Yet the lives of her father and her brother,[18] who had committed a deed "justifiable neither in law nor morality," as even a dear friend would admit,[19] depended on this pomp and pageantry of the ancient system of privilege to which she was opposed. Disillusionments piled up upon one another in those bitter weeks.

iii

In September of 1797 Mary Wollstonecraft had been buried in Saint Pancras Churchyard, the birth of her own little Mary having proved fatal. Lady Mountcashell was familiar with Godwin's writing, and longed to make the acquaintance of the husband of her old friend. In 1800 she had the opportunity. J. P. Curran, the brilliant orator and supporter of the Irish cause, wrote to Godwin urging him to visit Ireland. He spoke of his admirers who knew his works and were eager to meet him: "One of them, Lady Mountcashel [sic], who is now settled in Dublin for the summer, speaks of you with peculiar regard, mixed with a tender and regretful retrospect to past times and to past events with which you have yourself been connected."[1]

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[18] He was tried for murder at the Cork Assizes in the next month and also acquitted.

[19] Barrington, op. cit.

[1] Paul, op. cit., I, 363.

In a month the meeting had taken place. Like the shoemaker Hardy, Godwin seems to have been somewhat impressed. On the ninth of July he went to dine at Moira House, and wrote to Marshal, "Last Wednesday I dined with three countesses--Countess-dowager Moira (it was at her house), Earl and Countess Granard, and Countess Mountcashell, and on Sunday I am to dine at Lady Mountcashell's."[2] Pym, Moore, and Curran were also at the dinner, and he was in much the same company throughout his stay, as the following extracts from his diary reveal: 13 July, "dine at la. Mountcashell's w. C[urran]"; 20 July, "dine at Webb's w. C[urran]'s, la. Mountcashell, Gould, Terry & 3 Reeves's"; 21 July, "Dine at Mountcashell's (Glen of the Downs): call, w. her, on J. C. Walker"; 28 July, "Old Court: Devil's Glen, w. la. Mountcashell, Mrs. Moore & 2 Enfans: dine, w. them, at Dunran."[3]

In a letter to Marshall on 2 August, Godwin mentioned that the two people he had been most eager to meet in Ireland were Grattan and Lady Mountcashell. He explained that on the thirteenth he had gone about eighteen miles out of Dublin on an invitation to Lady Mountcashell's and had been delighted with the scenery:

> With this quantity of gratification I might have rested satisfied. No more than this obtruded itself on my acceptance. But I invited myself to a second and a third dinner

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[2] *Ibid*., I, 366.

[3] Godwin MSS.

> with Lady Mountcashell, July 21 and 28, and a second at Grattan's, July 29. On the 28th, Lady Mountcashell conducted me in her cabriole to the Devil's Glen, 20 or 30 miles from Dublin, and infinitely the most stupendous scene I ever saw.[4]

In this same letter he described his hostess:

> Lady Mountcashell is a singular character: a democrat and a republican in all their sternness, yet with no ordinary portion either of understanding or good nature. If any of our comic writers were to fall in her company, the infallible consequence would be her being gibbetted in a play. She is uncommonly tall and brawny, with bad teeth, white eyes, and a handsome countenance. She commonly dresses, as I have seen Mrs. Fenwick dressed out of poverty, with a grey gown, and no linen visible; but with gigantic arms, which she commonly folds, naked and exposed almost up the shoulder.[5]

If this seems a merciless piece of description of a hostess to whose house one has invited oneself, it is nevertheless remarkably vivid and unbiased, and when tempered by later and gentler accounts it leaves a clear impression of her appearance.[6]

Godwin kept up a correspondence with the lady of the handsome countenance after he returned to London, and on 29 September 1801 he was able to record in his diary, "Lady

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[4] Paul, op. cit., I, 368.

[5] Ibid., pp. 369-370.

[6] It might be recalled that Mrs. Mason in the Original Stories felt the necessity of constantly impressing on the elder of her two charges the need for neatness and care in her dress and personal appearance; the child showed a distressing tendency to lie in bed till the last minute and then to appear without having washed her face or brushed her teeth.

Mountcashell & Miss Wilmot call." She called a half dozen more times before the end of November, sometimes with Catherine Wilmot, the young lady whom she had brought with her as a traveling companion, and sometimes with her two little girls, Helena and Jane, whom Godwin had met and admired (but not so much as his own Mary and Fanny) when in Ireland. The dreams of the United Irishwoman were dissolved forever with the Irish Union and she was about to start on a memorable tour of the continent, taking advantage of the promise of peace. On 1 October the preliminaries of what was to be the Treaty of Amiens were signed in London, and in December of that year the Mountcashell entourage was in Paris.

The trip has been recorded by Lady Mountcashell's young protégée, Catherine Wilmot, in a detailed journal kept along the way.[7] It was a fairly large party, since besides the two daughters, three of Lord and Lady Mountcashell's sons, Stephen, Robert and Edward, were with their parents, and another boy, Richard, was born on 25 June 1802 while his mother was in Paris. Miss Wilmot was dazzled. Lord Mountcashell's coronated equipage attracted crowds. She could not resist comparing her beloved patroness with the women of France: "There was so much rouge on the cheeks of all the ladies, that handsome as she is, her face looked pale and

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[7] Wilmot, op. cit. The entire account of the tour is drawn from this source, as indicated by page references in the text.

cold, like a frosty moon" (p. 27). They watched Bonaparte review his troops under their window in the Faubourg St. Germain, looking "pale as ashes" and dressed in scarlet velvet, richly embroidered in gold (pp. 35-36).

The nine months in Paris provided a register of brilliant acquaintances. At a party at the home of the American ambassador to Portugal they met the famous Baroness de Stael-Holstein (Necker's daughter), Robert R. Livingston (the American minister to France who negotiated the Louisiana Purchase), and Mary Wollstonecraft's old friend, Helen Maria Williams, who had been imprisoned by Robespierre (pp. 38-39).

They were invited to Miss Williams' semi-weekly soirées, which they found the gathering place of intellectuals and revolutionaries. They met there John Hurford Stone, who had befriended Charlotte Corday at her trial; Koskiusko, the Polish patriot, who later entertained Lord Mountcashell and his party; La Harpe, the author and critic and the "great friend and Crony" of Stone and Miss Williams; Lazare Carnot, the revolutionary statesman; Lord Holland; and the actor John Philip Kemble, of whom they had already seen a good deal in London (pp. 76-77).

Lady Mountcashell made one of her pilgrimages to a political hero, Tom Paine, and spent an entire morning in his rooms on the sixth or seventh floor of a house in a remote part of Paris, where he lived surrounded by construction models and children. "During the entire morning that we spent with him, they were playing about the room, overturning all his

machinery and putting everybody out of patience but himself," wrote Catherine, who marveled at his great good temper. She reported him disgracefully neglectful of his person, with a face red as fire from drinking spirits, but "in spite of his surprising ugliness, the expression of his countenance is luminous, his manners easy and benevolent, and his conversation remarkably entertaining" (pp. 56-57). Years later, when Shelley and Claire met Lady Mountcashell in Pisa, they found her library a veritable gold mine of the works of Paine, and they must certainly have enjoyed her impressions of the eccentric writer whom she so intensely admired, whose works had been one of the bibles of the United Irish movement.

Lady Mountcashell kept in touch with her Irish patriots while she was in Paris. She saw the M.P. William Parnell (grandfather of Charles Stewart Parnell), and she met the dashing Robert Emmett, apparently for the first time. The destitute widow of Wolfe Tone came to her in Paris with a letter of introduction and a plea for assistance for her fatherless children.[8] She saw also the American patriots, both of whom were distinguished as authors as well as statesmen--Joel Barlow and that "double-refined American," Joel Robert Poinsett (p. 55). At his home at the Louvre they frequently saw the revolutionary painter, Jacques Louis David (p. 61).

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[8] Mrs. M. McTier to Dr. William Drennan, The Drennan Letters, edited by D. A. Chart (Belfast, 1931), 19 February 1802, pp. 315-316.

On one occasion the Mountcashell party was presented to Madame Buonaparte, and they dined at the Tuilleries with Napoleon and his wife, where Lady Mountcashell "looking beautiful and dressed in black crepe and diamonds was handed in to dinner by the English Minister." It was at this party that General Grouchy, the Marshal of France, "had just been admiring Lady Mountcashell and in allusion to that said, 'it was not necessary to go to Italy to look for Venus's'" (pp. 71-72).

Another momentous dinner party was held at the American ambassador's, at which Lady Mountcashell was handed in to dinner by General Berthier, the Minister of War, and Catherine was escorted by Tallyrand, who moved toward her "paunch foremost" and astonished the young lady with his cormorant appetite. Also in the company were the Marquis de LaFayette, and the writer Volney, whose Ruins of Empire was to influence Shelley so greatly. Many years later Lady Mountcashell recalled for Claire Clairmont a bit of their conversation:

> Lady M--told Volney how happy she was to see the author of the Ruins of Empire--He said Never wish to see an author, content yourself with his book & be assured it is the best part about him--And the manners of Volney were so rude & rough that she was tempted to say Ecce signum.[9]

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[9] Ashley MSS., 19 April 1820. The Shelleys were probably present on that evening at Casa Silva when she told the anecdote. Claire herself had by this time ample experience with the subject of the conversation, and followed the note in her journal with "What he said is very true there is scarcely an author who does not prejudice the opinion of his work by being known."

Of their own entertaining in Paris Catherine wrote:

> Almost every evening we either visit or are visited, for morning visits are always paid here in the evening, if it is not a Bull to say so. Kosciusko comes and tumbles on the ground with the children; young DeCastor's Tutor comes and talks about the Punic War; Joel Barlow calls and tells us American stories (pp. 74-75).

In September of 1802, after nine months of glamorous life in Paris, the Mountcashells, with six children now, moved on to continue their triumphs in Italy. In Florence they met Alfieri and were taken to the theatre by Tassoni, the Minister of the Italian Republic, and the Princess Montimiletto (of whom Claire Clairmont was to see a good deal twenty years later). They met the sculptor Canova and Angelica Kaufmann, whom they often visited (p. 199).

At Naples Lady Mountcashell was a general favourite among the Neapolitan ladies:

> Every day there came proofs of this, in the shape of Beautiful Bouquets of Carnations as large as Peonies without exaggeration, invitations, painted and emboss'd notes of enquiry, offers of eternal friendship, and all kinds of affectionate civilities. As these were always accepted of, she in return gave them a splendid Ball where multitudes were assembled and which so flatter'd their vanity that every species of attention was redoubled sevenfold (p. 145).

One must make allowances for the starry-eyed enthusiasm of the author of these journals; for here everything was more beautiful, more exciting, more glamorous than she had dreamed possible. Above all, she adored her patroness, and saw her always as a stunningly handsome woman. A portrait of Lady Mountcashell was probably made at this time, to judge by the

neo-Grecian dress and coiffure then in vogue, and shows a face intelligent and amused, with a bust that implies rather statuesque proportions and a hint of the enormous bare arms which impressed Godwin. Shelley's description "amiable and wise" seems justified by that face.

However Lady Mountcashell appeared, there is no doubt that she was then at the peak of a brilliant social career. Not yet thirty, she had poise and energy and was enthusiastically prepared to accept all invitations. She did not neglect her intellectual interests, but attempted to meet the writers, the artists, and the politically distinguished wherever she went. As Shelley said, she "entered deeply into the best and selectest spirit of the age."

iv

A footnote to The Complete Peerage states that Lord and Lady Mountcashell were among those unfortunate English who were caught in France at the outbreak of war in 1803 and detained by Buonaparte for eleven years until the cessation of hostilities in 1814.[1] News of their internment came to Catherine Wilmot's sister in Russia on 17 September:

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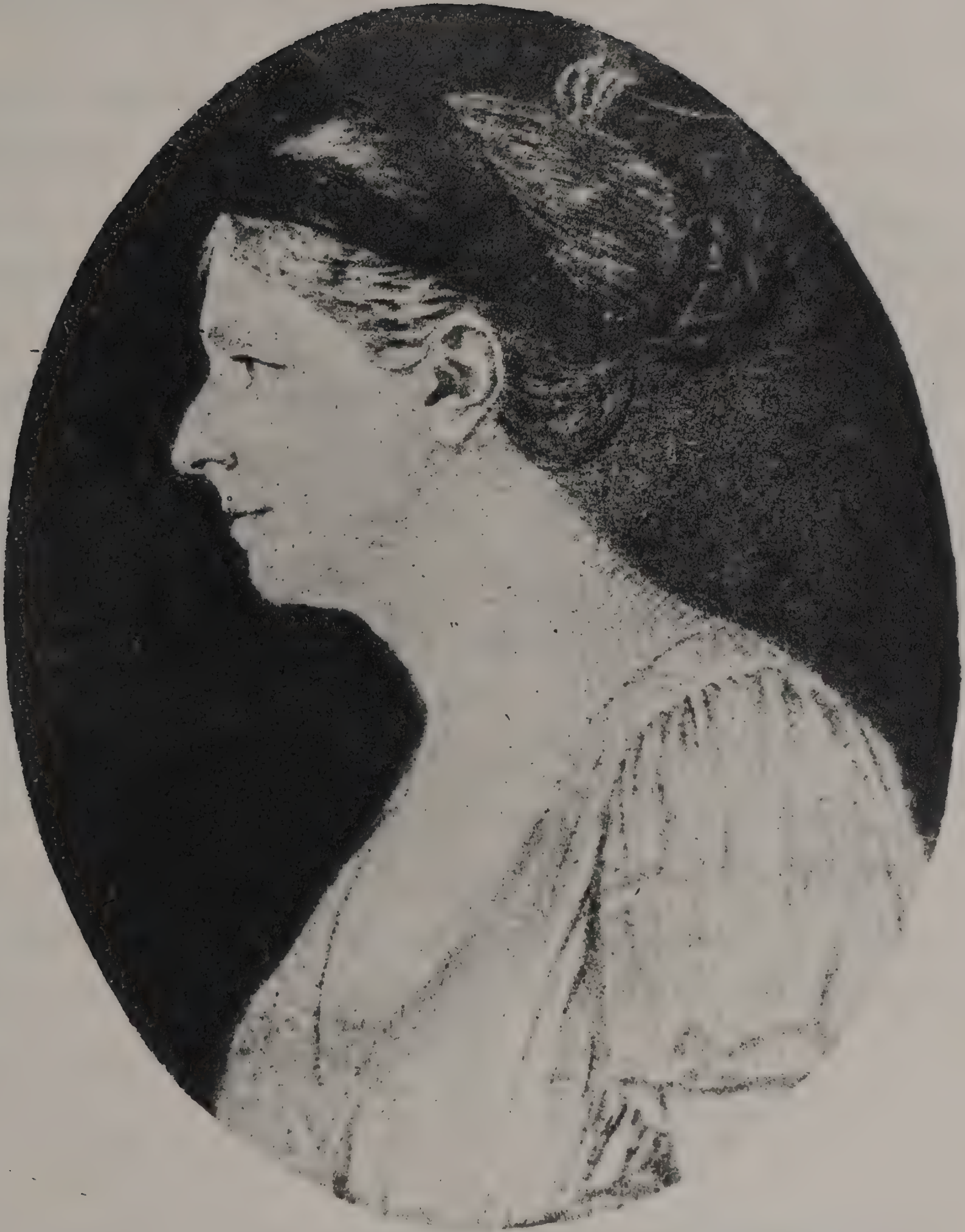
[1] G.E.C[okayne], op. cit., IX, 311.

Margaret, Countess Mountcashell



> In the evening a letter from Mrs. Hamilton to Princess D[aschkaw] & me containing an account of my precious Kitty, being confin'd as a Prisoner in Florence with the Mountcashells. How dreadful are the time, when a journey of pleasure & amusement ends in imprisonment! To Kitty this will not be a matter of much concern.[2]

The news of the war came to Lady Mountcashell at the worst possible time. She had left the two little girls with their governess, Mrs. Ruard, and the three oldest boys with their tutor, Mr. Egan, in Nismes, while she and her husband, with Catherine Wilmot and the baby Richard, had gone on into Italy. Now on the tenth of July the baby was just getting over an attack of measles and Lady Mountcashell herself had been seriously ill. English gentlemen were absolutely prohibited from returning to their own countries, and Lord Mountcashell had to resign himself, against all his tastes and desires, to a prolonged stay abroad. He possibly did not return to Ireland until 1814; nothing more is known of him. Catherine Wilmot made her way home with friends who were returning through Germany, and upon Lady Mountcashell devolved the responsibility of gathering up the children (their tutor had, of course been interned) and making arrangements for their education and eventual return to England.[3]

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[2] Martha Wilmot Bradford and Catherine Wilmot, The Russian Journals, edited by the Marchioness of Londonderry and H. M. Hyde (London, 1935), p. 50.

[3] Wilmot, op. cit., pp. 100-101, 196, 200, and 221.

Something about the following years can be gathered from the pamphlets of the Mountcashells' son Stephen, when, as third Earl Mountcashell, he became active in the interests of church reform. In a pamphlet "against purgatory" he said that he had received his early education in the convent of St. Isadore in Rome. He had become an enthusiastic Catholic, but having been removed thence by his parents, he, under their guidance and authority, returned to Protestantism.[4] This suggests that in 1803, when Stephen was twelve, his mother had brought him to Rome from Nismes, undoubtedly with the younger children, and put him in school. In 1829 Stephen published his correspondence with the Reverend J. Eager, whom he had turned down in a request for funds for a Catholic school. "Having resided during a good portion of my life on the continent, for some years in Italy, and a short time in Portugal," he considered himself an authority on Roman Catholic education--and was against it.[5] Lady Mountcashell wrote to Shelley in 1819 that she had spent eight years of her life in Italy, five of them (presumably 1814-1819) in Pisa.[6] The three

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[4] P. C. Tuomey, A Refutation of the Earl of Mountcashell's Pamphlet Against Purgatory (Cork, 1828). Dr. Edward McAleer informs me that there is no record of Stephen's enrollment at St. Isadore. He may have been there for only a brief period.

[5] Stephen Moore, third Earl of Mountcashell, Correspondence Between the Earl of Mountcashell and the Reverend J. Eager (London, 1829), p. 13.

[6] Abinger MSS., PM. 30 November 1819.

remaining years were probably 1803-1806, after which she started back to England with the children, spending some time in Portugal on the way. A stay in Switzerland may be indicated by the marriage of Stephen, in 1819, to a girl from the canton of Berne, Anna Maria Wyss, a relative of the Johann David Wyss whose [Swiss] Family Robinson Crusoe was published by the Godwins in 1814, in its first English translation.

By 9 July 1807, Lady Mountcashell was back in England. In that month she saw Godwin at least five times, and apparently came to his assistance financially, for on 26 July he recorded in his diary, "Accounts Apres diner, C[ountess] Mountcashell, £200." In September and October she visited in Skinner Street, often staying for dinner with the family (all the children were then home; Mary was ten and Claire nine), and frequently Godwin called on her. She had found another way to help the Godwins, for on 30 December her volume of children's tales, Stories of Old Daniel, or Tales of Wonderland Delight was published by M. J. Godwin and Company.[7] This must have been the period of her closest acquaintance with the second Mrs. Godwin, with whom she was in the future to carry on the correspondence which had hitherto been conducted with her husband.

Very shortly after her return to England and Ireland in

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[7] Godwin MSS. Miss Grylls reports a thirteenth edition of the Stories of Old Daniel, dated 1850.--Claire Clairmont, p. 236.

1807 Lady Mountcashell must have become acquainted with George William Tighe, a cousin of the authoress of the then-popular "Psyche," and a son of Edward Tighe, M.P., of Rossana, County Wicklow. This may have been the gentleman of whom Lord Edward Fitzgerald had written to his mother from his Wicklow retreat, 27 April 1793: "In short, by what I hear of this place, I shall be very quiet,--not a gentleman nearer me than six miles, except a young Mr. Tighe, whom I like."[8] It is not impossible that with friends in common Lady Mountcashell might have known Tighe before she went abroad. However, their intimacy was well established before this, since on 19 July 1809 a daughter Laurette was born to them.[9]

One knows at least that Tighe called on Godwin in Skinner Street on 25 May 1812, and the last mention of Lady Mountcashell in the Godwin diary falls on 7 August 1814.[10] At that time the war was just over, the treaty had been signed 30 May, and London was gay with fire-works, Chinese lanterns, and elaborate bridges and booths in the city's parks. The pageantry lasted all through the summer, and Lord Mountcashell may have been one of the first of the exiled gentlemen to

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[8] Moore, Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, I, 225.

[9] Ashley MSS., 19 July 1820, Claire recorded in her journal, "Tetta's Birthday--She is 11 yrs." Laura may have been born in Vienna, for her mother tells in Advice to Young Mothers on the Physical Education of Children (London, 1823) about her observation of the policy of Viennese doctors about child-birth.

[10] Godwin MSS.

return. Whether he saw his wife, or whether they had long since parted for good, she was probably in London in August on the eve of her departure with Tighe and Laurette for her life-long self-imposed exile in Pisa. Their second daughter, Nerina, was born on 26 June 1815.[11]

Only one disturbing piece of evidence remains to be examined. This is the series of letters from Claire's mother, Mrs. Godwin, to Lady Mountcashell, known only from the several copies (with revisions) made by Claire when she got the letters from Lady Mountcashell herself in 1832.[12] No scholar has ever dared to use these letters as conclusive evidence, but it has been generally agreed that, although grossly inaccurate in detail, both in Mrs. Godwin's side of the story and in Claire's further perversion of it, the copies were based on genuine originals (were not made up out of whole cloth by Claire) and in general they deal with real occurrences.

The first letter discussed by Dowden was dated in Claire's transcript 7 August 1814. According to Godwin's diary, this was the very day that the recipient of the letter was in

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[11] Ashley MSS., 20 June 1821: "The birthday of Nerina--6 yrs. old." According to Dr. McAleer, she was named Catherine Elizabeth Louisa Tighe. Her sister's full name was Anna Laura Georgina.

[12] The original letters have been seen by no scholar and were apparently destroyed by Claire or lost at the time of her death. If they were returned to Lady Mountcashell, presumably they would still be with her papers at San Marcello. They have not been found there. Selections from Claire's copies have been printed from the Forman MSS. in Dowden, op. cit., II, 541-551 (Appendix B), and Grylls, op. cit., pp. 276-280 (Appendix D).

Skinner Street, whence the letter was sent. The letter told of the disappearance of Mary and Claire with Shelley on 28 July, and begged Lady Mountcashell, who was presumed to be on the Continent at the time, to exert her influence to get Claire away from Mary and Shelley if the eloping party were to come to her.[13] The letter would be patently ridiculous if Lady Mountcashell had actually been in London shortly after the elopement and had called at the Godwins', no matter how inaccurate Claire's transcription of the date might happen to be.

The problem is not limited to this letter alone. None of the letters reveal the slightest evidence that Mrs. Godwin saw Lady Mountcashell before she left England. They take it for granted that she had preceded the truants in their flight, and they do not really face the possibility that Shelley and the girls might actually come to her. For the next letter tells the whole story of the flight (Mrs. Godwin's version) and the events leading up to it.[14] Part of the face-saving fiction is that Marshall, not Mrs. Godwin herself, ran after Claire to France, but could not find her. Dowden's explanation of this fantasy, proved false by both Godwin's diary and that of Shelley and Mary, seems perfectly consistent with Mrs. Godwin's card-stacking throughout her letters: she did not

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[13] Dowden, op. cit., II, 542.

[14] Ibid., II, 542-546.

want Lady Mountcashell to know that Claire, her own daughter, had left of her own free will, flaunted her mother's entreaties in the hotel at Calais, and gone on to Paris by her own willful choice. According to her mother's story, Claire was practically kidnapped. These fabrications would have been discovered immediately to be lies if Lady Mountcashell had seen anybody at Skinner Street on 7 August or if Shelley and the girls had actually encountered her anywhere on their trip. The only possible solution seems to be that Godwin concealed from his wife the fact that Lady Mountcashell had called. Perhaps she made the trip to Italy by sea, so that the chance of her seeing Shelley and the girls was very remote indeed.[15]

Whatever the true story of the year 1814 may be, the fact is that within a few years Lady Mountcashell was permanently settled in Pisa as the wife of Mr. Tighe, generally called "Tatty." It was at first a common law marriage, since Lord Mountcashell was to live until 1823, but in 1826 they were legally united by the English chaplain in Pisa, the Reverend

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[15] The problems raised by these letters are the usual problems associated with any documents written or copied by Claire in her later years. On the whole, wherever further evidence can be found, the late letters and copies can be proved erroneous. I look with deep mistrust on the entire body of them, despite the fact that they have been used rather trustingly by White and Miss Grylls. They were all part of the Clairmont archives bought by H. Buxton Forman from Pauline Clairmont after Claire's death. Mr. Maurice Buxton Forman has written to me that he can no longer find them. If the entire body has been lost, I cannot feel, having examined the printed scraps, that Shelley or Clairmont scholarship is much the worse for it.

Neat.[16] Before the marriage she never took Tighe's name, but lived under the pseudonym "Mrs. Mason," the idealized Mary Wollstonecraft of the Original Stories. She published her books under the name M.J. Moore--Moore was Lord Mountcashell's name--and later, after his death, she wrote as M.J., Countess Dowager Mountcashell. "I have not much news to tell you of Mrs. Mason," Claire wrote to Mary on 16 September 1834:

> . . . one thing is changed--she has retaken her real name--by Mr. Tighe's desire. He it was who forbade this in former years and refusing her his own, forced her to assume a false one. This made no complaints. Lately of his own accord he insisted upon her being called Lady Mountcashell--she resisted but yielded as in the former case to his peremptoriness.[17]

It was probably at this time that she had calling cards printed:

Contessa di Mountcashell
Nata King

but did not live through another year to use them all. She was never to resume the butterfly social life of 1802 of which the calling card was a symbol; her resignation from fashionable society when she first settled down with "Tatty" had been relatively complete. She was able to write to Shelley at the end of 1819, "I have not been in Florence,

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[16] Dr. McAleer has examined the marriage certificate.

[17] Abinger MSS.

except once, en passant these fifteen years."[18]

Perhaps in giving up her connections with the past she remembered not only her mother's separation from her husband, but that nearly a century before, a daughter of another Lord Kingston, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, had retired from the fashionable world and left her husband and grown-up children for twenty years of comparative retirement in Italy.

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With the arrival of the Shelleys in Pisa in 1819, Mrs. Mason made an exception to her policy of studiously avoiding English company. There were many forces to draw the two families together. In isolating herself from her former acquaintances, she had never broken off her correspondence with the Godwins. For their sake and for the memory of Mary Wollstonecraft she welcomed the younger generation though they were already her friends. She remembered Mary and "saucy Jane" from her many visits to Skinner Street. In addition, she knew that she could count on their sympathetic understanding of her irregular marital relationship, and Shelley had the pleasure of seeing the theories of marriage to which he had given full voice in the notes to Queen Mab working out in practice in this one case at least. Here was

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[18] Abinger MSS., printed in Shelley and Mary, II, 446.

a calm and happy home life, with all the lares and penates for which he had not only the greatest respect but a real personal longing, established upon the solid rock without the sanction of either church or state.

And to Shelley, who in 1812 had written,

> O thou ocean,
> Whose multitudinous billows ever lash
> Erin's green isles, on whose shores this venturous arm
> Would plant the flag of liberty, roll on ![1]

the Shelley who had written An Address to the Irish People, this lady who had been a friend of his heroes could not fail to be interesting. She had a great collection of books and pamphlets on the Irish question, and she put them at his disposal. At their almost daily teas she told tales of the rebellion. And she could sympathize, too, with his disillusion in the power of pamphlets and debating societies and the "venturous arm" of enthusiastic youth to change overnight the political and social evils of the centuries. She wrote to Mary:

> I am very sorry to hear such a bad account of Mr. Shelley, and I fear that the interest he takes in the political state of England is very injurious to his health. I speak feelingly on this subject, as my nerves have never recovered the shake they got about twenty years ago on a similar occasion. I have long been convinced that if Ministers proposed to pass a bill to prohibit men from walking upon two legs, the great majority of the Parliament would instantly pop down on their hands and feet. And this is but a beginning. So that Mr. Shelley ought

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[1] "To Ireland," Julian Works, III, 104.

> to endeavour to turn his thoughts from what he cannot mend, and what is only likely to produce new subjects of vexation. Since my country sank never to rise again, I have been a cool politician; but I cannot forget what I once felt, and can still sympathize with those capable of similar feelings.[2]

In matters of religion they were equally in agreement. "The 'Debates,'" she writes in the same letter, "are in one point of view rather droll; but the French Deputy, who 'complained of an excess of religion, which disturbed the peace of the country,' seems to me a better sort of person than any of the English speakers." It was one of her rules to consider a prejudiced person as one labouring under a serious illness.[3] For her, too, Italy was a "paradise of exiles."

The fact that Shelley was a poet and Mary a novelist drew her to them, for Lady Mountcashell had always been drawn to writers, and she herself turned out a number of modest volumes

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[2] Abinger MSS., 12 January 1820, printed, with an inaccurate date, in Shelley and Mary, II, 449-450. Among her tales of her Irish political acquaintance is her delightful narrative of her trials with Fanny Holcroft, daughter of the politician, as a governess. The letters of Lady Mountcashell and Holcroft are in Paul, op. cit., II, 110-115, and Lady Mountcashell's story to Claire and the Shelleys (in Claire's journal, 13 February 1820) is to be found in part in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, pp. 117-118.

[3] Ashley MSS., 14 December 1820.

throughout her Italian residence.[4]

It is important to realize what a great amount of time the Shelleys spent with Mrs. Mason and her family. In the journal kept by Shelley and Mary there are fifty-seven entries between 27 January and 27 April--their first three months in Pisa. Of these fifty-seven, there are only nine which do not record some time spent with Mrs. Mason. "Spend the day after 12 in Casa Silva," is a typical entry (15 February 1820), and the Shelleys took tea or dinner there with great regularity. Mary rode out almost daily with Mrs. Mason, and Nerina's measles of 28 February were passed on by 9 March to Percy Florence.[5]

Claire has descriptions of Mrs. Mason and her husband which temper Godwin's somewhat repellant sketch:

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[4] Many of these were children's stories, written for her own youngsters and then published. The Godwins published her first volume, Stories of Old Daniel. Lady Mountcashell's letters to Mary Shelley are full of references to the stories which she continued to publish. Her Simple Stories, in Words of One Syllable, for Little Boys and Girls went into a new edition, illustrated with gaudy prints, in 1824. Her most important work is Advice to Young Mothers on the Physical Education of Children, By a Grandmother (London, 1823). This was reprinted as A Grandmother's Advice, etc. in 1835 under her own name, "M.J., Countess Dowager Mountcashell."

[5] I have examined Mary's and Shelley's journals in the manuscript at Lord Abinger's. There is some inaccuracy in their printing in The Book of Shelley and Mary upon which Frederick L. Jones based his published edition. For example, the manuscript entries "M.M." for "Madame Mason" have been transcribed "Mr. M" and appear thus in Jones. That Mrs. Mason and not Mr. Tighe was meant is clear in a comparison of Mary's notes with the corresponding entries in Claire's diary.

> She was very tall, of a lofty and calm presence. Her features were regular and delicate; her large blue eyes singularly well set; her complexion of a clear pale, but yet full of life, and giving an idea of health. Her countenance beamed mildly, with the expression of a refined, cultivated, and highly cheerful mind. In all my intercourse with her I never saw the smallest symptom of the melancholy and discontent which was so striking in Byron and Shelley. She was ever all hopefulness and serenity and benevolence; her countenance was perfectly irradiated by these sentiments, and at the same time [by sentiments][6] of purity and unconscious sweetness and beauty.

Of Mr. Tighe, she said that he was--

> . . . a most accurate and penetrating judge of human nature; he had lived with the hermit and the sage in their refined solitude; he had lived in the world, and had learned that the man bred in the world and living for it has seldom any heart or conscience.[7]

Tighe and Mrs. Mason were of assistance to the Shelleys in innumerable ways. They helped with such everyday details as finding lodgings and servants and providing a mailing address. During the brief period when the Gisbornes appeared to Shelley as "filthy and odious animals," he was free to write to Claire, "They do not visit Mary as they promised, and indeed if they did, I certainly should not stay in the house to receive them. I have already planned a retreat to Mrs. Mason's."[8]

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[6] The brackets are Dowden's.

[7] Dowden, op. cit., II, 317-318. Neither Miss Grylls nor I have been able to discover the source of these quotations. I believe it must be in the papers of Maurice Buxton Forman, in which case it probably represents the mellowed opinion of Claire's later years.

[8] Shelley to Claire, 29 October 1820, Julian Works, X, 215-216.

That Claire should describe that lady as "giving an idea of health" is extremely significant. For surely health was one of the principal desiderata at that time. The birth of Percy Florence had only partially alleviated Mary's acute state of depression, and the arrival of more and more desperate letters from her father poisoned both her health and the baby's. "Words of consolation are but empty sound," Mrs. Mason wrote to her when she heard of her condition, "for to time alone it belongs to wear out the tears of affliction. However, a woman who gives milk should make every exertion to be cheerful, on account of the child she nourishes."[9] It was typical of her to be both sympathetic and practical at the same time.

Shelley's health, also, was in a miserable state when he first met Mrs. Mason. And among Mrs. Mason's friends was just the man for him--Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri, who had furnished one of the incentives for the Shelleys' moving to Pisa. "I never heard one so willing to reason with a patient, so little inclined to give drugs," she wrote. "From what you say of your complaint, I think I can guess pretty nearly how he will treat you, and I am much mistaken if he orders either of the medicines you have mentioned."[10] She was quite correct in

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[9] Abinger MSS., 14 January 1820. Printed in Shelley and Mary, II, 451.

[10] Abinger MSS., 21 January 1820. Printed with an incorrect date in Shelley and Mary, II, 452.

her prediction, for a month later Mary wrote to Marianne Hunt, "The most famous surgeon in all Italy lives in Pisa, Vaccà--he is a very pleasant man--a great republican & no Xtian--He tells Shelley to take care of himself & strengthen himself but to take no medicine."[11] Shelley's nervous upsets continued intermittently through the spring, but by summertime the combination of freedom from drugs and medicines and the relaxation of the Bagni di San Giuliano had restored him to the good health which he so desired.

Mrs. Mason's experience with the nine children of her own she had brought up,[12] plus the early practice which comes of being the oldest girl in a family of ten, must have been reassuring to Mary, who had had such wretched luck with her own family that she dared not allow herself to plan on the future of Percy Florence. Mrs. Mason's close personal friendship with medical men like Bojti, who was one of the court physicians to the Grand Duke,[13] Tantini, and Vaccà gave her access to the best medical knowledge of the day.

Her broad experience and her friendship with medical men were reflected in her extremely competent book, Advice to

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[11] Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 95. See also her letter to Amelia Curran, 19 January 1820, Ibid., I, 94.

[12] Possibly eleven. See Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 114.

[13] She was able to arrange, apparently through the Tantinis, for Claire to stay with the Bojtis in Florence, where she became a close friend of the family.

Young Mothers on the Physical Education of Children, published in London in 1823 as "By a Grandmother." Medwin spoke of her as "a lady whose retirement from the world was not unprofitable, for perhaps it was devoted to one of the best works on the Education of Children which we possess."[14] Mrs. Mason herself reported Vaccà's thorough approval of its medical advice.[15]

She begged the young mother to have faith in a reliable doctor and a reputable pharmacist, and she attacked quackery and the superstitious and ignorant advice of untrained advisors. The object of her volume was to prevent rather than to cure. She announced:

> When, at some future time, the progress of science shall have simplified the art of healing, to the general advantage of mankind, the preventive part of medicine will, probably, be considered as the most important; and, in consequence, the number of maladies be diminished (Preface, P. iii).

After the modern reader has adjusted his mind to the appalling number of ailments to which a child of the nineteenth century was subject, he is impressed with the soundness of the advice offered, even when judged by the most recent standards. She was very "modern" in her recognition of the interrelation of psychological and physical reactions; she realized that a person may make his condition more serious than the original

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[14] Medwin, Revised Life of Shelley, p. 233.

[15] Abinger MSS., 16 February 1823.

physical derangement would warrant simply with worry and anger. Her sound advice to Shelley is reflected in the statement that "uneasiness of mind is likely to encourage far more injury than drugs can ever remedy."[16]

Like her governess before her, she was interested in educational theory, and it was to be expected that this would find its place in her book. She reproved parents for encouraging sentimentality or the excessive indulgence of feelings in children. She warned them to avoid jealousy among their youngsters, pointing out both the psychological dangers and the physical repercussions. "No expression of contempt should ever be made use of towards children," she warned.

> If it produce the effect desired, it degrades the child in its own opinion, and makes it feel that most painful and depressing of all sensations, shame: if it fail of this effect, it fills the mind with indignation and resentment, and is in every way injurious to both the physical and moral welfare.[17]

Punishment should be used only when necessary, and then should be immediate and brief and should appear to be the natural consequence of the misdemeanor. Unreasonableness and inconsistency, the idle threat of punishment not carried out, she considered deplorable.

In her own life, her educational theories produced various results. Her present-day descendants count it a family joke

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[16] Op. cit., p. 172.

[17] Ibid., pp. 336-337.

that their ancestress could desert seven children and her husband and then make an international reputation as an authority on the education of children. Her oldest son, Stephen, seems to have resented a certain harshness in her,[18] and Godwin, in 1801, reproved her for not showing her children enough affection. She replied, speaking of her two elder boys, that she wanted them to have reasonable affection, but to learn to think for themselves. "I should studiously shun that sort of adulatory affection which frequently induces both old and young to suppose themselves perfect."[19] By her two Italian daughters she was adored, and Claire Clairmont's letters reveal an unblemished picture of their adulation of their mother.

Another service which Mrs. Mason was able to perform for Shelley was to proffer advice, moral support, and practical assistance in his dealings with the Clairmonts and Godwins. Ever since Claire defied her mother and ran away with Mary and Shelley in 1814, Shelley had undertaken to support her and be both friend and family to her. Her brother Charles was often in need of assistance, and most important of all Shelley was continually disturbed by the exorbitant demands made upon him by Godwin. Property was the right of that man who most needed it (according to the theories of property

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[18] Wilmot, op. cit., p. vii.

[19] Abinger MSS.

rights laid down in Political Justice), and there was no doubt in Godwin's mind that he was that needy man.

After 1819 Godwin's financial troubles had become most acute. He wrote heart-wringing letters, speaking of their coming eviction into the alleys of London, and called Shelley's reasonable explaining letter "scurrilous." In 1820 and again in 1822 Shelley had to beg him not to write to Mary under her own name or to convey tidings of his own desperate state in the same letter with passages that must be shown Mary, since the unmoderated news from Skinner Street upset her to the extent that the life of the baby at her breast was endangered. Here Mrs. Mason could help. She was in constant correspondence with Mrs. Godwin, and much of the news both coming and going could be sifted through her. At the time of Godwin's threatened eviction from the Skinner Street house, Shelley could say to the Gisbornes, "Do not allude to this letter. If you have any communications unfit for Mary's agitated mind to make to me, address to me under cover to Mrs. Mason."[20] She could be trusted to keep silent, when writing to Mrs. Godwin, on all matters which could not be exposed to that lady's insatiable curiosity. She saved Shelley the necessity of keeping the Godwins informed about Claire and could send snippets of Skinner Street news to Mary when she was not receiving mail from England.

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[20] Julian Works, X, 181.

She was also ready to do her best to help Charles Clairmont, who had arrived in Italy on 4 September 1819, after fifteen months in Spain. He was soon off again to Vienna, and no sooner had Mrs. Mason heard the news than she wrote to her old traveling-companion Catherine Wilmot, begging her to write to her sister in Vienna "to desire her to do anything in her power to serve any person of that name who may appear there as a teacher of the English and other languages."[21] But by the end of the month, no recommendations had arrived, and she was forced to write to Shelley:

> In regard to Charles I can only advise him to call on Mrs. Bradford wife of the Ambassador's Chaplain at Vienna & if she has not heard anything of him, let him say that he had been given to understand that her sister Miss Wilmot had written to recommend him to her protection as a teacher of English etc. etc. I have never seen Mrs. B--but there was a time I would have given him a letter to her--at present I can only make it a point with her sister, one of my oldest and most constant friends. . . .Charles must not mention me.[22]

Lady Mountcashell may have been responsible for preventing an exodus of the Godwins from England at the time of their

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[21] Abinger MSS., 14 November 1819, printed in Shelley and Mary, II, 445.

[22] Abinger MSS., PM. 30 November 1819, printed in Shelley and Mary, II, 447. Catherine Wilmot's sister, Martha, married in 1812 the Reverend William Bradford, Rector of Storrington, Sussex, later Chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna. She had lived with the Princess Daschkaw in Russia from 1803-1808, where she was joined by Catherine in 1805 (see above, p. 346), and she edited the Memoirs of the Princess Daschkaw, Lady of Honour to Catherine II, Empress of All the Russians, Written by Herself. . . (London, 1840).

financial troubles in 1819, by her writing to Shelley of the discomforts Godwin would probably suffer on such a trip. She was worried lest Mary, in her desperation, should urge him too warmly to join them. "It may sound odd," she added, "but I can't help thinking that Mrs. Godwin would enjoy a tour in foreign countries more than he would.[23] At any rate, they did not come, and Shelley was spared a burden that might well have proved disastrous.

One of the most valuable ways in which Mrs. Mason could help Shelley was in taking from his shoulders some of the responsibility for Claire's welfare. She is known to scholars as much for being "Claire's Minerva" as for anything else. She saw clearly the strain of Claire's presence on Mary, and constantly exerted her influence to lodge Claire elsewhere. In the spring of 1822, for instance, she wrote to Shelley:

> I regret the loss of Mary's good health & spirits but hope it is only the consequence of her present situation & therefore merely temporary--but I dread Claire's being in the same house for a month or two, & wish the W[illiam]s were half a mile from you.[24]

She had introduced Claire to her medical friends and was influential in arranging for her to stay with the Bojtis as a paying guest in their large family, where she could go on with her lessons. Shelley accompanied her to Florence, and on

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[23] Abinger MSS., 30 November 1819.

[24] Abinger MSS., PM. 28 May 1822.

21 October 1820 she moved into Casa Bojti, opposite the Palazzo Pitti. She led a busy life of reading, studying, and visits, with many excursions with the children, Louisa and Annina. She was much liked by the Bojtis and their close friends the Tantinis, but Claire had wild dreams, and continued to brood. She wrote such wretchedly dissatisfied letters to Shelley that her unhappiness was visible to the Tantinis, and Shelley wrote to tell her that "but for Mrs. Mason," who had gone out of her way to make the arrangements with the Bojtis, he would ask her to come back.[25] By 1 November he was worried about her health and had talked to Mrs. Mason, who had one more possible plan but who did not want to arouse Claire's hopes prematurely. Shelley wrote to Claire, "*when you return from Pisa to Florence*, she will give you a letter to the Princess, charging me at the same time to keep this promise a secret from you." Although she had not seen or heard from the Princess Montemiletto in sixteen years, Mrs. Mason was willing to attempt to reopen the acquaintance in the hope that something might be found to satisfy Claire and establish her independence of the Shelleys. She must have found Claire's dissatisfaction trying, for Shelley went on to report, "she seemed to think it weak and unreasonable in you, not to bear all this solitude and inconvenience in the hope of some change, or something that she could or would

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[25] Julian *Works*, X, 213-214.

do.--She opposed strongly the idea of your return."[26] As it happened, after a short visit with the Shelleys Claire was convinced that the best thing she could do for the time being was remain at the Bojtis', and Shelley continued to pay for her stay with them.

In another way Lady Mountcashell was able to relieve Shelley's mind about Claire. He had provided for her in his will, yet he realized the possibility that he might die before his father, though he probably would not have guessed that his father's death would come twenty-two years after his own. He told her in the spring of 1821 that the idea of her setting up a school under Madame Mason's aegis seemed plausible to him, as long as she avoided the mistakes of another of her _protégées_, Mathilda Field, who had set up a school rather too limited, Shelley thought, in both prices and plan. He continued:

> I should be glad, in case of _transmigration_ to leave you under such powerful & such secure protection as her's: it would be one less subject for regret, to me, if I could consider--my death--as no irrimediable [_sic_] misfortune to you; as in this case it would not.--The incumbent of my reversion still flourishes; & you must be aware that the sensations with which it

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[26] _Ibid._, X, 223-226. For the dating of this letter, see Appendix F. The Princess Montemiletto (variously spelled) is described by Catherine Wilmot, _op. cit._, p. 128. Claire, according to her journal, called upon the Princess in Florence on 12 January 1821 and the call was returned the next day. From then till the end of Claire's stay in Italy they saw each other frequently.

> has pleased the Devil to endow the frame of his successor, are not the strongest pledges of longevity.[27]

Indeed, Shelley could not have left her to the care of a person better suited to provide the long-range steadying influence which she needed. More than thirty years later Claire wrote to her sister-in-law:

> I made the most terrible mistakes so long as I was with the S[helley]s--they were young and I was young--as soon as I got into Lady Mountcashell's hands (who was fifty-two)[28] I succeeded in all I undertook--but then I had confidence in her and obeyed her implicitly. God only can tell from what gulf of ruin the counsels of that dear Lady saved me! She set me on the right path, which I have followed ever since.[29]

"Hers is the only house," Claire wrote to Mary in 1832, "except my Mother's in which all my life I have always felt at home."[30] Claire visited Lady Mountcashell's daughters regularly and one of Lady Mountcashell's great-grandchildren, the Marchesa Trigona, grandchild of Nerina Cini, still recalls "Aunt Claire," as a lively old lady with beautiful white curls.

Aside from assisting with personal and family problems, Mrs. Mason was the kind of person who could encourage Shelley

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[27] In The Letters of Mary W. Shelley, I, 141-142.

[28] Actually Lady Mountcashell was no more than forty-seven when Claire came to Pisa in 1819.

[29] Clairmont MSS., 16 August 1856.

[30] Abinger MSS., 26 October 1832.

the poet. She was a delightful raconteuse and a brilliant conversationalist, unlike some of the stultifying bores with whom Shelley had been thrown. She had an excellent library, which Claire delighted to "arrange," and access to other libraries in Pisa.[31] She was herself extremely well educated. In attempting to describe her for Hogg, Shelley said:

> I have been fortunate enough to make acquaintance here with a most interesting woman, in whose society we spend a great deal of our time. She is married, and has two children; her husband is, what husbands too commonly are, far inferior to her, but not in the proportion of Mrs. Gisborne's. You will have some idea of the sort of person, when I tell you that I am now reading with her the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus.[32]

Two of Shelley's poems can be traced in some slight way to her influence or, at least, presence. Medwin says of her:

> She was a superior and accomplished woman, and a great resource to Shelley who read with her Greek. He told me that she was the source of the inspiration of his Sensitive Plant, and that the scene of it was laid in her Garden, as unpoetical a place as could be well imagined--but a true poet can turn everything into beauty; Guido is said to have converted into a Madonna his Colour grinder.[33]

As Forman has pointed out in his note to this passage, "the source of the inspiration" of a poem is not necessarily the

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[31] She engaged to find in Pisa all the books which Mary would need in her research on Valperga, at which she was engaged in 1819, as soon as Mary had exhausted the manuscript sources in Florence. Abinger MSS. [1 November 1819], printed in Shelley and Mary, II, 447.

[32] Julian Works, X, 159.

[33] Medwin, Revised Life of Shelley, p. 265.

prototype of a character in it. Shelley's own word on the subject is found in a letter to Leigh Hunt, in which he is describing Jane Williams, "a most delightful person, whom we all agree is the exact antitype of the Lady I described in The Sensitive Plant, though this must have been a pure anticipated cognition, as it was written a year before I knew her."[34] Although Ingpen annotated this passage: "Mrs. Mason (Lady Mountcashell) was the lady originally portrayed in this poem,"[35] it is difficult to visualize her in the role "like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean," and certainly the interpretation of the Lady as Love or Intellectual Beauty is the valid one.[36] Only the garden eastward in Eden would have sufficed as an actual model for the place where

> . . .all rare blossoms from every clime
> Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

It is impossible, too, that any earthly woman sat for the portrait of the Lady whose trailing hair erased the mark of her airy footstep from the grass.

Lady Mountcashell might still have had something to do with the inspiration of the poem. It is dated "Pisa. March

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[34] Julian Works, X, 406-407.

[35] Ibid., X, 406n.

[36] White, op. cit., II, 563. White here demonstrates that the Lady of the garden corresponds with the two Marys of "Julian and Maddalo," as well as with Shelley's own Mary before and after the alienation following the death of Clara.

1820," when Shelley was enjoying the first enthusiastic months of acquaintance with her. In 1823, the Mason family moved from Casa Silva, the tall walnut trees which had shaded it were cut, and in several of her letters to Mary at that time Mrs. Mason spoke of her desire to move with her from there a Sensitive Plant, but she feared the dangers of transplanting.[37]

It was while with Mrs. Mason that Shelley conceived the idea of Œdipus Tyrannus. She had brought the children over to visit the Shelleys at San Giuliano on 24 August 1821, on the day of the fair of San Bartolommeo. Shelley's attempt to read aloud his "Ode to Liberty" was nearly drowned out by the grunting of the pigs brought to market at the fair. He compared it to the chorus of frogs in Aristophanes, "and it being an hour of merriment, and one ludicrous situation suggesting another, he imagined a political satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus--"[38] This circumstance seems interesting largely because it illustrates the high-spirited, liberal-minded, and literate conversation which Shelley could enjoy in Mrs. Mason's company, and from which he could draw the stuff of which poems might be made.

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[37] Abinger MSS., PM. 6 February 1823 (one of several letters on the subject).

[38] Mary Shelley, "Note on Œdipus Tyrannus," Julian Works, II, 350. Also Ashley MSS., 24 August 1821.

Relations were not always so congenial among the friends. Shelley sometimes found Mrs. Mason difficult to approach, and Mary, although she had much to thank her for, never felt warmly toward her mother's old friend. At the time of Shelley's death she craved more warm-hearted sympathy than the older woman was prepared to give her, and she complained of her coldness to Maria Gisborne--

> . . . yet she felt his loss keenly, & would be very glad to serve me--but it is not cold offers of service that one wants --one's wounded spirit demands a number of nameless & slight but dear attentions that are a balm & wanting them one feels a bitterness which is a painful addition to one's other suffering.[39]

And Maria answered in a vein that suggests a further ground for Mary's dissatisfaction:

> I am not surprised at what you say of Mrs. Mason. She has great and good qualities; but she is not a perfect being; and it is owing to the deficiencies you complain of that she is enabled to dwell contentedly as she does, with such a man as Mr. T--.[40]

Mrs. Mason might have said, had she seen this, _ecce signum_, but she had already answered the charge in what was probably her last letter to Shelley: "If all the world valued obscure tranquillity as much as T & I do it would be a happier though

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[39] _Letters of Mary W. Shelley_, I, 188.

[40] Abinger MSS., 8 October 1822.

possibly much duller world than it is."[41] It was largely due to her influence that Shelley could say, "Our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa, and the transplanted tree flourishes not."[42]

vi

After the death of Shelley, Mrs. Mason saw Claire off to Vienna, and in July of 1823 Mary too departed, taking Percy Florence to England. In those two years, 1822 and 1823, she had felt directly or indirectly the impact of the deaths of Allegra; of Shelley and Edward Williams; of her mother, Lady Kingsborough; and of her husband, Lord Mountcashell. To start the next year fresh she moved with her family to a new house in Pisa, Casa Achinta, where they saw practically no English and cultivated more than before the society of the Italian intellectuals in the town.

Four years later she had gathered about her another group of poets fond of good conversation, liberal politics, and some comedy.[1] Among them were the young Giuseppe Giusti, just

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[41] Abinger MSS., [28 May 1822].

[42] Julian Works, X, 315.

[1] For the account of the Accademia, as well as for other information about the Mountcashell and Cini families, I am indebted to Neri Farina Cini, La Famiglia Cini e La Carteria della Lima (1807-1943) (Firenze, 1947), pp. 53-57.

finishing his law studies at the University of Pisa and only beginning to attempt the burlesques which were to establish his literary reputation, and the more distinguished Giacomo Leopardi, then thirty years old. They founded the Accademia dei Lunatici, of which Mrs. Mason was *presidente e Animatrice*, and as each member took as a pseudonym the name of a constellation, she was appropriately "Bilancia."

It must have been a heterogeneous group which contained Leopardi, famous throughout Europe for his melancholy pessimism, and Giusti with his rollicking high spirits. That Leopardi scarcely tolerated the boisterous good humor of the younger academicians can be seen from his report of one evening at Mrs. Mason's, in his *Zibaldone*:

> Guadagnoli recitante in mia presenza all' Accademia de' Lunatici in Pisa, presso madama Mason, le sue sestine burlesche sopra la propria vita, accompagnando il ridicolo dello stilo e del soggetto con quello dei gesti e della recitazione. Sentimento doloroso che io provo in casi simili, vedendo un uomo giovane, ponendo in burla se stesso, la propría gioventú, le proprie aventure, e dandosi come in ispettacolo e in oggetto di riso, rinunziare ad ogni cara speranza, al pensiero d' ispirar qualche cosa nell' animo delle donne, pensiero sí naturale ai giovani, a abbracciare e quasi scegliere in sua parte la vecchiezza spontaneamente e in sul fiore degli anni : genere di disperazione de' piú tristi a vedersi, e tanto piú tristo quanto è congiunto ad un riso sincero, e ad una perfetta *gaieté de coeur* (Recanati, 3 dicembre, festa di San Francesco Saverio, 1828).[2]

But Leopardi's sojourn in Pisa was not unpleasant, and he remembered Mrs. Mason and her lovely daughter Laurette with

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[2] Giacomo Leopardi, *Pensieri di Varia Filosofia e di Bella Letteratura*, (Firenze, 1900), VI, 356-357.

affection. "Alla Lauretta, a Mad. Mason, a Carmignani [the Pisan professor whose lecture on penal jurisdiction he had attended] vi prego a fare mille complimenti e saluti per mia parte," he wrote to Professor Rosini in 1828, and in the next year, "Salute tanto tanto la Lauretta."[3] Leopardi was undoubtedly drawn to Mrs. Mason as the woman who could tell him about Byron, in whom he had been interested since at least 1820.[4] She could provide him, too, with copies of Shelley's poems and a first-hand account of that fellow poet.[5]

One of the earliest existing poems of the young Giusti was written over the pseudonym of "Cerbero" on the occasion of the founding of the *Accademia* and dedicated to "Bilancia":

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[3] Leopardi, *Appendice all' Epistolario e agli Scritti Giovanili* (Firenze, 1878), pp. 124-127.

[4] See Guido Muoni, *La Fama del Byron e il Byronismo in Italia* (Milano, 1903), pp. 27-34.

[5] Scholars need look no farther than here for the source of Leopardi's acquaintance with Shelley's works. In considering the similarity of treatment of similar subject matter in the two poets, Chiappelli says, "Dico cosi, perchè non apparisce che il Leopardi avesse conosciute le liriche e i drammi dello Shelley: sebbene non sia impossibile che egli, il quale conosceva benissimo l'inglese, ne avesse avuta contezza o dal Conte Lavinio Spada, esperto nelle letterature straniere e suo familiare, o dal Platen e dallo Schultz in Napoli."--Allesandro Chiappelli, "Shelley e Leopardi a Napoli," *Plegrea*, 5 Marzo 1900, I, 418n.

L'Arte di Farsi Avere in Tasca

  Visse (non mi recordo in qual paese)
Una dama di rara qualità
Che a coltivar le lettere intraprese
Con gran calore dalla prima età.
Come gradita e celebre si rese
Col profitto di quelle in società,
Se benignò ciascuno udir mi vuole,
Vi esporro brevemente, in due parole.
  Era moglie costei d'un certo tale
Che a guisa d'un Canonico del Duomo
Vivendo non facea nè ben nè male;
Ed era il non plus ultra del buon-uomo . . .
  Sa i riti del Divano e della China;
Sa come Adamo ed Eva aveano i sandali;
Conosce ogni arte ed ogni disciplina
Degli Etruschi, degli Eruli e dei Vandali.
Ma il primo onor, la sua miglior dottrina
Consiste nel piantar carote a scandali.[6]

These opening lines help to fill in the somewhat sketchy picture of Mr. Tighe, whom Claire described as having "an agreeable contenance," but who was one of the peculiar English in Pisa--"Tatty who sets potatoes in pots."[7] "Cerbero's" sketch accords these descriptions, as well as Shelley's "Mr. Tighe is seriously my friend."[8]

The family of Mrs. Mason can be traced through later years in the letters of Mary, Claire, and Hogg. The latter, visiting Mrs. Mason in 1825 wrote back, "Mrs. M. spoke of our Shelley,

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[6] Cini, op. cit., 54-55.

[7] Ashley MSS., 28 April 1820, and 5 May 1820. Tighe acquired some fame for his agricultural writings.

[8] Julian Works, X, 315.

as he ought to be spoken of."[9] At the end of November in 1832, the pretty Laurette was married against her mother's wish to a Corsican named Galloni who turned out to be a thorough scoundrel.[10] About this time Nerina went through a stage of "regretting that she knows three languages, is an accomplished musician, and has a decided turn for literature, because she is afraid it will stand in the way of her marrying some beloved blackbeard of an Italian." The entire family had become so prejudiced in favor of Italy and the Italian people that Claire was forced to exclaim:

> I never met with people so prejudiced in certain ways as the Masons. They abhor despotic governments on account of the blighting influence they have on the subjects of them, but when you make their conclusions turn upon the Italians, they deny it--no! no!--they have all the honour and uprightness which distinguish republicans.[11]

Their highest compliment to Claire was to tell her, to her horror, that she had nothing English about her.

Early in April, 1834, Nerina married the charming Bartolomeo Cini, loved by everybody who knew him. Her marriage until her early death was a blissfully happy one.[12]

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[9] T. J. Hogg, After Shelley, p. 46.

[10] In later years Laura recovered some of her happiness by a marriage to Professor Placido Tardy.

[11] Abinger MSS., 1 February 1833.

[12] See two of Claire's letters on this subject in Appendix G.

She left two girls, Margherita (Farina) and Elena (French), and a son, Giovanni Cosimo. Her husband was Claire's friend throughout his life and was appointed her executor in her will.[13] On 29 January 1835, Lady Mountcashell died, and in March 1837 Mr. Tighe was buried beside her in the Protestant cemetery at Leghorn.[14]

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[13] See Appendix I.

[14] Typical of the smoke screens which have been thrown up around Lady Mountcashell's life is the following: "She was content to share her husband's retirement at Moore Park, where she lived till his death. Two years later she found a second husband in Mr. George William Tighe, a member of a well-known Irish family. As regards her remaining years, there appears to be some obscurity. We know, however, that she once more visited the Continent, her death occurring in Switzerland in 1835." Wilmot, op. cit., viii. No two printed sources agree on the details of her life; the chronology of this paragraph is based on Claire Clairmont's letters.

Appendix C

MARIANNA CANDIDA DIONIGI

The Signora Marianna Candida Dionigi was born in 1756 of very distinguished parents.[1] Her father was the doctor Giuseppe Candidi, and her mother, gifted both as a historian and a mathematician, was Maddalena Scilla, the last of distinguished family of Massina. From her earliest years Marianna studied music seriously; she was thoroughly schooled in the gentle arts of dancing and singing, and as a harpist and pianist was admired by Anfossi, Paisiello, and Cimarosa. She studied several languages: first Latin and Greek (which were to bring her to proficiency as a classical scholar and to great honor as an archeologist), and later French and

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[1] The following account is drawn from the *Biografia degli Italiani Illustri*, edited by Emilio de Tipaldo (Venezia, 1837), V, 37-39; and Nicola Marcone, *Marianna Dionigi e le Sue Opere* (Roma, 1896). There is also a biography (*N.V.*) by Luigi Cardinali.

English.

She turned when still very young to landscape painting, which she studied under the director of the academy of Perugia, Carlo Labruzzi, and she amazed her contemporaries with the persistence and the animo virile that kept her for months at a time buried in the country studying with brush in hand the various changes in nature. She worked in tempera, water-color, and encaustic (having found herself allergic to the varnish necessary to work in oils), and graciously gave to her friends her original works and sent her copies of such masters as Claude Lorraine, Salvator Rosa, and Nicolas Poussin to various galleries, as far afield as "Charlestown."[2] So famous was she when still a child that she was invited by the court of France to come there to supervise the education of a princess, but little Marianna was too attached to her mother to accept.

When she attained the age of fifteen she was married to Domenico Dionigi, of a noble family of Ferrara, a gentleman well versed in letters and jurisprudence. Seven children were born before the death of Domenico in 1801, and their mother, as might be expected, was much concerned with perfecting their education. She appears from the results to have been successful, for her Enrichetta was at the age of ten inscribed in the company of Goethe among the academy of

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[2] Charleston, South Carolina? Charlestown, Massachusetts?

the Arcadians for precocity in poetry. Another daughter, Carolina, acquired *une erudizione vastissima* in history, and she added to this accomplishment a wide acclaim as a gentle and loving mother. The family seems to have been indeed a matriarchy, for of Marianna's two sons one can discover only that Alessandro had four children, none of whom lived to carry on the family name and renown, and that Ottavio, the one child mentioned by Claire, died unmarried.

Early in her married life Marianna Dionigi watched her home become the meeting place of the great men in archeology and art--d'Agincourt, Visconti, Canova. She herself was an honored member of no less than ten academies, including the most important, the Accademia di San Luca. This academy lent the full force of its authority to her critical work: *Sulla pittura dei paesi corredate da un trattato di Architettura e di Prospettiva* (1816).[3] Her other work was also authoritative: *Sulle cinque Città del Lazio che diconsi fondata dal Re Saturno*. In carrying out the archeological research for this impressive folio volume she watched every measurement made by the architect, supervised every step which she did not make herself, collected inscriptions, and made her own drawings of the excavations.

A few years after Shelley visited her in Rome, she took

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[3] Otherwise known as *Prospettiva e regole di paesaggio*, or *Le Regole elementare della Pittura de' Paesi*.

up her paintings and her famous collections of autograph letters and retired to her little villa near Cività Lavinia, where she died, attended by her son Ottavio, in 1826. After her death one of the broad streets in the new section of Rome was named for her--the Via Marianna Dionigi, running from the Piazza Cavour to the Tiber.

Appendix D

ANDREA VACCÀ BERLINGHIERI

Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri had been born on 3 February 1772, the son and grandson of distinguished physicians.[1] His father, Francesco Vaccà Berlinghieri (1732-1812), author of more than a dozen medical works, was associated with the University of Pisa, where his three sons later distinguished themselves in their various fields. Andrea, having indicated from the beginning his special interest in surgery, journeyed to Paris in 1787 to study at the best medical institutions in Europe. When still only fifteen years old he managed to convince the prince of French surgeons, Pierre Joseph Dessault, that he was naturally adapted to being a surgeon and promising enough to be taken on as a student. He succeeded brilliantly under Dessault, and before returning to Italy he made a trip

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[1] The following account is based on Giusti, op. cit. and Pozzolini, op. cit.

to England, in the company of his elder brother, the experimental physicist Leopoldo, to pay homage to Hunter, Bell, and Cullen.

Like the rest of his family, Andrea was infected with the revolutionary spirit, and he assisted at the storming of the Bastille when he was seventeen. Then in 1791 the boy returned home to Pisa, where under his own father he completed the medical aspects of his education, thereby rounding out his excellent surgical training. In 1793, his studies complete, he was awarded la laurea dottorale by the University of Pisa. Immediately, while still in his twenty-first year, he published his first work, Osservazioni sulla Chirurgia di Beniamino Bell, which despite the defects obvious to the author in later years, was so remarkably mature that it was taken for the work of his father and was widely praised.

The French invasion of 1799 called to the young man who had helped to take the Bastille, and Andrea joined the French forces and became attached to General Olivier, who was desperately wounded shortly thereafter at the battle of Trebbia. Vaccà followed the general to Paris and gained much acclaim by the miraculous cures which he worked. While in France he renewed and extended his acquaintance among the leading medical scientists, and he challenged some of the most firmly established surgeons and saw his techniques supersede theirs. He read a paper before the Società d'Emulazione and published, in French, the treatise which provided the final assurance of

his reputation, Trattato sui mali venerei.

Andrea Vaccà returned to his native Pisa in 1800 and was offered a professorship at the University, where he became the colleague of his father and of his two brothers--one in science and the other in law. In 1803, just after he turned thirty, Andrea was further honored by the endowment of a new chair in medicine, la Cattedra di Clinica, established for him in recognition of his remarkable achievement in revolutionizing the medical profession, so long in disrepute in Italy. In 1804 he was offered the Cattedra di Scarpa at the University of Pavia, one of the highest honors possible in his native land, but he declined to accept it, stating as his reason his great attachment to his father. As a team, the one in medical science and the other in surgery, they made Pisa the capital of their profession in Italy.

As a teacher he was wise in the tradition of Hippocrates, to whom he was frequently compared,[2] and as a physician he was

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[2] Vaccà's best-remembered statements to his students help to explain his great success as teacher and surgeon, as well as the quality of mind which gained him the warm friendship of Mrs. Mason and of Shelley: "Operate pel bene dell' umanità, non per la vostra riputazione. La Chirurgia è un' arte d' esperienza; essa deve progredire; cercatene dunque il miglioramento. Interrogate le forze della natura, e non operate che per necessità. Operate secondo i principii, e non vi lasciate sedurre dalle apparenze: esse ingannano talvolta senza rimedio. La semplicità negli strumenti è la misura della perfezione nelle operazioni chirurgiche. Siate affetuosi cogl' infermi, perchè sono i modi soavi una seconda medicina. Non mostrate di disperarne giammai, perchè la serenità dell' animo giova alla tranquillità dei sensi, e guida più facilmente alla guarigione."--Giusti, op. cit., p. 62.

firm and gentle, inspiring confidence in his patients. He was particularly good with children. Men and women came from all parts of Europe, from St. Petersburg and from Egypt, to consult him. He continued to experiment and to write, and like his father he published thirteen books of great value to his colleagues. He invented four new instruments as well, and perfected four already in use.

In 1809 his older brother Leopoldo died, and after five years, by a special dispensation, Andrea married his widow, the excellent Sofia Cauderon. Having been known as a model son, he now became a gentle and devoted husband and father. Nearly everyone who has written about Andrea Vaccà has paid tribute to the beauty of his family relationships. When he died, on 6 September 1826, at the age of fifty-four, he left his wife with three little boys, Francesco, Leopoldo, and Giuseppe.

Appendix E

TOMMASO SGRICCI

Tommaso Sgricci had been born on 31 October 1789, and was thus thirty-one when he first met the Shelleys.[1] The son of a surgeon who had died when his son was only two years old, Tommaso received his training in law at the Collegio Ferdinando di Pisa and graduated in 1810. He was appointed to a six-years post of legal practice by the city of Florence, under an agreement that bound him to continue his legal studies and to present an annual certificate of his accomplishment. These certificates of his assiduous scholarship and his moral probity are still in the files of the Archivo di Fraternità in Florence. But by 1812 Sgricci had discovered his talent for

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[1] The following account of the life of Tommaso Sgricci is based on Luigi Carrer, in de Tipaldo, *op. cit.*, III, 404-410, and Ugo Viviani, *Un Genio Aretino: Tommaso Sgricci, Poeta tragico improvvisatore* (Arezzo, 1928). Tom Medwin in his account (*Revised Life of Shelley*, pp. 265-266) outdid himself in inaccuracy.

improvisation. One story tells of his tremendous success during the carnival week, when he masqueraded as a Pythoness and delighted all who heard him as he issued impromptu prophesies in verse. However he discovered his gift, he had learned to profit by it by the year 1812, at which time he was often invited during his vacations into the homes of the nobility to deliver his lyric impromptus. On 9 October 1813 he gave his first full-dress accademia in his home town of Arezzo, and he was successful enough to savour the mingled tears and applause of his audience--a brief but none the less satisfying power over their sentiments. By the time his legal studies were completed in 1816, the drudgery of the law courts had become insupportable to him, and he launched out boldly into the more colorful and more immediately rewarding career in which he was already practiced, proficient, and very much in demand.

From January to April he spent in Siena, giving occasional performances. Here for the first time he had to face the full strength of his mother's disappointment and disapproval. To her he seemed to be deserting an honourable profession for the trappings of a mountebank. But his choice had already been made, and he proceeded on his tour, via Arezzo and Perugia to Rome, his "Capitale del Mondo." In Rome he met with intoxicating success, and his letters to his mother contain elated accounts of the swelling gate receipts and the plaudits of the newspapers. Most of the biographers of Sgricci agree that

success went to his head and that he lost the respect of several of his close friends while in Rome.

After a few months he moved north, stopping at Pesaro, where he was entertained by Conte Perticare, "il quale m'idolatra, e m'idolatra sua moglie, la figlia del nostro Monti ed una delle più belle donne in Italia," as he wrote to his mother.[2] The charming Costanza Monti accompanied him north to his triumphs in Bologna and Milan, delighted at the opportunity to be a patroness "delle Muse," and at Milan her father, the renowned Vincenzo Monti,[3] became the patron of the elect of the Muses, Tommaso Sgricci. It is easy to see from Polidori's account why Sgricci ran into trouble in Milan. The newspapers confirm the account of an inferior performance, doubly irritating because of the repeated rejection of subjects which had been drawn in the usual manner and which were much in demand by the audience. But Sgricci's advance publicity, spiced with the gossip about the daughter of Monti, filled the house repeatedly with spectators (like Polidori who, despite his expression of utter boredom, did go twice to hear him) many of whom were probably not lovers of the arts. He gave several more performances in Milan, on the whole more successful, but still marked by serious lapses of inspiration.

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[2] Viviani, op. cit., p. 47.

[3]

Questi è Vincenzo Monti cavaliero,
Gran traduttor de' traduttor d'Omero.
--Ugo Foscolo

At the very end of the year 1816 Pietro Giordani entered the dispute which was raging passionately over the merits or demerits of the improvvisatore. His article, "Dello Sgricci a degli improvvisatore in Italia," which damned the art as "ludus impudentiae," would have crushed a man of less devoted enthusiasm to his career, but Sgricci survived the blow and went on his way. He repeated his three-part program--one selection in blank verse (sciolti), one in terza rima, and one tragedy--through Italy in 1817, alternately quarreling and making peace with Monti. At the beginning of 1818 he fulfilled his ambition to return to Rome, but almost immediately after his arrival there he was arrested and exiled from that city, for reasons much debated but never settled, but probably for unguarded statements about the Prince Corsini.

Early in 1820 Sgricci was in Ravenna, where he was heard and applauded by Byron. Early in 1821, having met the Shelleys on 1 December 1820, he gave one accademia after another in Pisa and Lucca and stayed in that general neighborhood, spending much time in Florence with his mother, the Signora Martini, and with their old friend, the Marchesa Orlandini. Claire, who saw both women regularly, often met him on her calls.

The greatest triumphs of Sgricci's career were still to come. In 1823 he set out for Paris, where he was hailed triumphantly, and several of his tragedies were stenographically transcribed and printed. In 1825 he returned to Florence,

crowned with French laurels, and was offered a pension by the Grand Duke Ferdinand. Early in 1826 he returned to Rome, and in April he proceeded again to Paris and then for three months to England.[4] In March of 1827 he presented four tragedies in Rome and also completed a diplomatic mission there for Vittorio Fossombrone. In April he was summoned to the court of the King of Naples. In his old home, Arezzo, he was hailed as "l'unico Sgricci," and honored by a medal and a special printing of one of his tragedies.

Indeed, a great many of the compositions of the _improvvisatore_ found their way into print as his fame spread and his skill increased. Fifty items are listed in his bibliography, and many of these are made up of several works.[5] On the whole they have made disappointing reading for those who have gone to them hoping to recapture some of the glory of which so many have written. Mary Shelley found the shorthand version of the Death of Hector vastly inferior poetry to what she had remembered. Undoubtedly the magic was in the spell-binding delivery. Sgricci himself attempted, as his career drew to a close, to perform with a pen what he had been

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[4] It is perhaps important to note that Sgricci's famous sonnet "contro gl'Inglesi" was written at this period, and not at the period at which he knew the Anglo-Italians in Italy. --Domenico Guerri, "Un sonnetto dello Sgricci contro gl'Inglesi," _Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana_, LXXV (1920), 334.

[5] Viviani, _op. cit._, pp. 203-205.

accustomed to improvise on the stage, but he discovered that whenever he tried he was overcome by a violent nausea, the counterpart of the fever which afflicted him during his most impassioned tragedies--an indication of the enthusiastic (and eventually hysterical) intensity with which the impromptus were wrenched from him. After 1827 he found the strain too heavy and he quit the stage. In 1836 he died in Arezzo, after a long protracted illness.

Appendix F

THE DATING OF FOUR SHELLEY LETTERS

My study of Claire Clairmont's journals has enabled me to suggest more accurate dates for four of Shelley's letters than those arrived at by Ingpen in the Julian edition.

1

An understanding of the subject matter of Julian letter CCCCLVI[1] to Henry Reveley assists in the dating. This letter is the one which Shelley wrote to accompany the "chiroplast," that ingenious contraption for assisting the piano student with his fingering, which had been borrowed by Claire from Madame Du Plantis in Florence. According to Shelley's letter, Henry Reveley was to make drawings of the instrument so

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[1] Julian Works, X, 146.

that it might be copied and to return it immediately so that it might be sent back to Madame Merveilleux "on Sunday."

On Friday, 11 February 1820, Claire noted in her journal: "Impertinent letter from Madame Du Plantis concerning Chiroplast."[2] Clearly, then, the Sunday on which it was due back must have been one that fell before 11 February. It must also have been after the Shelley's return to Pisa on Wednesday, 26 January. Between those dates were two Sundays--30 January and 7 February. The necessary clue is provided by the Gisbornes' endorsement of the letter: "Recd. Monday morning ½ past twelve--soon after their return from Florence to Pisa. February or beginning of March, 1820."[3] The two halves of this endorsement were obviously not written at the same time. The first half, minutely accurate, must have been jotted down just after the letter was received; the second half was added much later, when the Gisbornes had forgotten even the month in which the Shelleys returned from Florence. The Monday morning reference thus dates Shelley's letter Monday, 31 January, the first Monday after his return to Pisa, and a day on which he made a trip to Leghorn.[4] The Sunday by which the chiroplast was to have been returned is thus 7 February; Madame Du Plantis' indignant note came on 11 February. By 26

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[2] Ashley MSS.

[3] Julian Works, X, 146.

[4] Mary Shelley's Journal, p. 128.

February Charles had received in Vienna a furious letter from her in which she complained to him of Claire's having taken away the instrument, "Case and all!"[5] A letter from Claire to the Gisbornes reveals that the misunderstanding was traced to the Procaccio, who had delivered the chiroplast, not to Henry, but to the English consul, who resided in the Gisborne's neighborhood. In this context, Shelley's letter becomes clear and 31 January 1819 emerges as the only possible date of composition.

ii

To Julian CCCCXCIX,[6] a long letter from Shelley in Pisa to Claire in Florence, Ingpen appends the following note: "Clare writes in her diary, 18 November, 'a letter from S.'"[7] There is no question that the letter was written in 1820, as Ingpen suggests, and Shelley himself headed his letter "November, Wednesday," but an examination of Claire's journal reveals no such entry on 18 November. The entry does occur on Thursday, 8 November, on the third page of entries for that date. A glance at the top of that manuscript page shows where Ingpen found his date. It was Claire's custom to

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[5] Bodleian MS. Shelley Adds. d. 5.

[6] Julian Works, X, 223-226.

[7] Ibid., X, 223n.

inscribe across the top of each journal page the month and the year; here she has written "November, 1820." The "20," however, is a little blurred and separated from the "18," so that the editor, finding the entry which he sought, glanced at the head of the page and saw what he must have taken to be "November 18 '20."

Can one assume, then, that 8 November was the date on which Claire received this particular letter from Shelley? The letter is headed Wednesday, and since it took about three days for a letter posted in Pisa to be received in Florence, it is improbable that Claire would have received a letter written on Wednesday as soon as Thursday. On 4 November she also recorded receiving a letter from Shelley, and since the Wednesday before the fourth was 1 November, the latter date seems externally to be the more probable.

Internal evidence is more conclusive. The Shelleys moved into Casa Galetti on Sunday, 29 October. From Shelley's statement to Claire of their new address one can infer that this was his first letter to her after the move. The letter which she received on 8 November was unquestionably the second (it has been lost). One can safely assume, therefore, that Shelley's letter was written on Wednesday, 1 November.

iii

An incorrect reading seems also to account for the misleading postmark date, 22 June 1821, supplied for Julian DXXXII.[8] Ingpen documents his citation of this postmark by a footnote: "Corrected from the original in Mr. T. J. Wise's collection." Fortunately, Mr. Wise reproduced the entire manuscript of this letter in facsimile in his Shelley Library, so that it is easily checked.[9] On the back of the letter, to be sure, is legibly stamped "22 GIUGNO." On the face, however, the full story is made clear. There is found the original postmark, "19 GIUGNO," as well as the evidence that Claire did not receive the letter in Florence, since it was forwarded to her in Pisa. According to her journal, she had left for Pisa on 19 June, the very date of the earlier postmark. She also recorded spending the whole day of Wednesday, 20 June, with Shelley. His postscript--"I don't send money till I hear do you come or no. Write next post"--makes it clear that his letter was written prior to 20 June. Claire had come on to Pisa of her own accord, without waiting for money, without letting Shelley know that she was on her way.

Shelley's letter is headed "Saturday." The last Saturday before Claire's departure from Florence was 16 June, a day on

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[8] Julian Works, X, 278-280.

[9] A Shelley Library (London, 1924), facing pp. 64-65.

which Shelley also wrote letters of considerable length to Ollier and to John Gisborne. The letter to Gisborne includes an account of the completion of Adonais in words almost identical with those in the letter to Claire. Both letters also discuss the death of Keats and the piracy of Queen Mab. This internal evidence joins with the body of external evidence which indicates that Shelley wrote his letter to Claire on Saturday, 16 June.[10]

iv

The problem of Shelley's letter to Claire, Julian CCCCXXVII,[11] is somewhat more serious. Ingpen has headed it: "[?Florence, 25 September 1819.]" But the manuscript in the Houghton Library at Harvard is clearly postmarked "FIRENZE 8 AGOSTO." No editor has to my knowledge heretofore commented on this disparity.

Before a date can be established for this letter, two conditions must be satisfied: Claire must be in Leghorn, for the letter is addressed to her at 1188 Via St. Francesco, Livorno; and Shelley must have had the opportunity to have slept at Empoli the night before the letter was written. Other hints

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[10] Wise himself suggests 19 June, which, while otherwise reasonable, does not fall on a Saturday.

[11] Julian Works, X, 85.

provided by the letter are the references to Dr. Palloni and to the Signora Tolomei [*sic* in the MS., not *Tolonei* as in the Julian edition]. On 25 September 1819 Claire was indeed in Leghorn or at Monte Nero (though there is no evidence that she was living away from the Shelleys or the Gisbornes, as the Via St. Francesco address would indicate), and Shelley might very well have stopped off at Empoli then en route to Florence with Charles Clairmont, as Ingpen indicated in his note by a quotation from Mary's journal. His suggested date has been accepted without question.[12]

The mystery of the 8 August postmark led me to investigate whether those basic conditions existed simultaneously at any other time. The only other possibility is the first week of August, 1821. At that time Claire was living in Leghorn with the Countess Tolomei and her daughters Nera and Angiola. Mary and Shelley were not far away, at the Bagni di Pisa. Mary's journal records that from 29 July to 2 August Shelley was on a trip to Florence to hunt for a house for Horace Smith.[13] On his return he found waiting for him a letter from Byron which made him decide to set out immediately for Ravenna. On 3 August he did set out; his first stop was to visit Claire

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[12] White incorporates the contents of this letter into his account of the September 1819 trip: "A note to Claire en route shows that Shelley was still suffering from the pain in his side and required opium in order to sleep."--*op. cit.*, II, 108.

[13] *Mary Shelley's Journal*, pp. 158-159.

at Leghorn. Her journal records his visit, which included the day of 4 August, Shelley's birthday, spent in rowing on the harbor, calling on the Countess Tolomei, and sailing out into the sea in the fine summer weather. Shelley left her at two in the afternoon. On 6 August he wrote to Mary from Bologna, suggesting that she invite Claire to spend a few days with her while he was away. This letter includes a very significant passage: "Above all take care both on your part and on that of the Masons that she does not know that I am on a visit to A. She would misinterpret everything."[14] Claire, then, knew that he was away, but did not know where. The easiest explanation would be that he was still house-hunting.

If one reads the letter in the light of these conditions, the probability that it was written at this time approaches certainty. "I slept at Empoli last night" suggests 5 August as the date of composition, since Empoli is a good half-day's trip from Leghorn, and we know Shelley was in Bologna on the sixth. "I am here in doubt about my hours, and fear that I shall not be able to see you again so soon as Thursday" appears a bit of dissembling to cover the anticipated length of his journey without committing himself. Shelley complained next of "a pain in my other side." There is evidence in a letter to Mary from Ravenna written on 11 August that he was suffering at just this time from pain in his side, due, he

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[14] Julian Works, X, 296.

thought, to the drinking water.[15] A pencil note on the inside of this folded note advises Claire to consult Palloni about the pain in her stomach. There is no evidence that the Shelleys knew Dr. Palloni before June, 1820, when Claire recorded in her journal his attendance on little Percy Florence. The only other mention of the doctor is in Claire's journal entry of 3 September 1821, when she met him at a dinner at the Villa Parenti in Leghorn, which she attended in the company of the Countess Tolomei. The final passage of Shelley's letter says: "Give my compts to the Sig^{n} Tolomei & pay her at the interval you think fit eleven crowns--& say that I have given a receipt for it. Say that I am going to see her House etc &^{c}." The earliest reference to the Countess Tolomei in Claire's journal is on 25 February 1821, when Claire met her at a veglione, or public ball, in Florence. Shelley's interview with her on 4 August, at which time he may well have made an arrangement to examine her house in Florence for the possible occupancy of Horace Smith, must have given him exactly the disguise he needed for his trip to Ravenna.

Only one clue remains to be fitted into place to make the dating of this letter certain. If it was written on 5 August, and if Shelley was by 6 August in Ravenna, why is his letter to Claire postmarked 8 August from Florence? The answer to that is made clear by an examination of the postal history of

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[15] *Ibid.*, X, 308.

Shelley's letter to Mary from Ravenna, 9 August 1821.[16] The letter is postmarked "15 AGOSTO" and "FIRENZE." The first sentence declares, "I wrote to you yesterday, and I begin another letter today without knowing exactly when I can send it, as I am told the Post only goes once a week." The last sentence of the same letter reads, "This is sent by express to Florence." Since Shelley could not very well post his letter to Claire for Bologna without arousing her suspicions, he simply carried it with him to Ravenna, then expressed it to Florence to be posted from there. Thus the 8 August postmark. The ruse worked. On 27 August, summarizing a fortnight's activities in her journal, Claire exclaimed, "In this time Shelley returned from Ravenna--Very unexpected news of Albè near arrival."

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[16] Ibid., X, 300-305.

Appendix G

TWO REPRESENTATIVE LETTERS FROM CLAIRE CLAIRMONT TO MARY SHELLEY

I

Villa Lucchesini Lucca, September 25th 1833

My dearest Mary

What a letter is the one I have just received from you[1]--full of the most melancholy predictions that before another year comes round your Fate will have been sealed and yourself no longer one of this world and you speak it with such a firm conviction that one must believe you and shudder--on me it produced the greatest sadness--I believe thoroughly in presentiments--I never knew you to have any before, and therefore

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[1] On 9 June 1833 Mary was attacked with influenza and suffered the aftereffects for several months.--Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 82. It was undoubtedly this affliction, the same which had claimed her closest friend at Harrow, that inspired Mary's melancholy letter. The letter itself has not been found.

your having them now is doubly awful. Would to God these visions you have may be the results of the typhus you have had. However it is your letter made me wretched. "Something will happen this year to me and since nothing can do that but my obit I expect it. I shall just be the age of my mother and have arrived at my first climacteric--next Friday is my birthday and before another comes I shall be translated to Paradise." I have read these words over a thousand times and believe them as religious people do in the gospel. Alas for me but so it is news of happiness would find me utterly incredulous--but misfortune will ever find the readiest reception in my mind. How shall I describe all I should feel were you to die. I pass all my life surrounded by enemies--every day and all day long I know nothing of but the looks and voices of the tyrants I serve--every moment of every hour brings calamity to me. Few are the persons who express or show an atom of interest in my welfare and you it appears to me are one of the few --conceive what I should feel were I to lose you. Enough on this subject. I do not address prayers to the Almighty for your preservation as most would do in such an extremity--experience has taught me in common with whole generations who have failed in their petitions that it would be utterly useless--no mercy would be shewn and it would only inspire me with hope the more bitterly to feel the blow when it does come. I will rather school myself in Stoicism the only thing that is not a lie in this Universe, for it teaches us to expect the

worst and by expectation to bear it. While I am so doing do you endeavor to avert the calamity by taking care of yourself --could I receive your assurance to this effect, I should feel a little tranquilized--but I know you indifferent to Death and therefore tremendously careless in defending against it. You confide yourself generously to every circumstance as if it were a friend, when they are in fact enemies leading us to ruin. Pray be careful in your diet--in your clothing and in not over fatiguing yourself. Make this sacrifice for a year, for this one terrible year, and when that is over I will relieve you from your precautions and you may throw yourself as you are wont upon your dear Chance that you believe so good natured. I could talk my whole letter through upon this subject and never think I had said enough, but it would so disgust you it might very likely give you the Cholera and produce the result I want to guard against. It is said, never do evil that good may come of it--and if they had said, never do good, because evil may come of it they had prescribed a rule of conduct no less moral.

I had a letter from Jane relating your annoyances with your Aunt.[2] I pitied you most truly. There is something

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[2] Everina Wollstonecraft. See Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 86. Miss Wollstonecraft lived at 12 Copenhagen Street, Pentonville, and died in the spring of 1842 "of natural decay aided by her determination to do nothing she was told."--Ibid., II, 181. Dowden cites a description by Miss Mary Hutton, who knew Miss Wollstonecraft as "an overbearing, disagreeable, ill-tempered woman, very sarcastic and very clever." --op. cit., II, 50-51.

quite savage in this new misfortune. Pazienza when one suffers for one's parents or children or friends--but Aunts and relations with whom one has never had the least connexion, who never troubled themselves about our welfare and never even thought of us till they stood in need of our assistance, to be burdened with is intolerable. You were nearly driven mad by her ways of going on--I can feel this, who have endured this for ten years.

The Bocella is delightful[3]--talented and high-minded and frank-hearted--we are very intimate--without being at all in love with Trelawny she has a great enthusiasm for him--this tells well of her judgement--it requires much to despise the public clamour and to discern the falsehood of what appears so plausible as do the grounds upon which he is blamed. Our mutual partiality for him made us friends at the very first interview and will keep us so I hope for I am not sure we feel so exactly alike upon other points which are important to friendship. She is very young and her principles as far as I yet see are not yet fixed--her education was full of prejudice and Bigotry; her own nature, the having come to Italy so young and the having read so many modern books of an enlarged way of thinking incline her to throw off her juvenile impressions, but the choice is not yet settled in her mind and

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[3] The Marchesa Jane Boccella, Trelawny's friend, was acting as guardian to his daughter by Tersitza, the eight-year-old Zella.

she fluctuates from one to the other. I remain perfectly neuter in the battle. She is not happy with her husband--he is very handsome but quite uncultivated and worse, neither understands nor appreciates her, but treats her with cold neglect--luckily however he is a very polite man--she has no children, and not one friend, now Trelawny has left, in Italy--her mother is married to and ruled by a man who hates her--so that young beautiful and talented as she is, she derives no benefit from these advantages but is and feels herself to be a very miserable outcast. She lives almost all the year round in a country house about a mile and a half from here. The house she has fitted up with english elegance and english comfort--soft carpets sofas and bergeres, the ample curtains and draperies, the well supplied Book cases, the engravings and albums on the tables, all english and so utterly different from the bare floors the poor scanty wooden furniture of most Italian villas. The situation is lovely--high up amid the mountains, upon a green platform cleared from the surrounding chesnut woods; you inhabit a clear open sunny space with roses and lilacs and every lighter shrub near you, and all beyond is ravines with mountain rivulets and embowering trees, and soaring peaks which here and there open and disclose sometimes the towering peaks of other mountains, and in one place a whole side view of the plain of Lucca. Two other villas are in the neighborhood, but they only just peek out from their respective nooks on the hill-sides, so deeply are

they hidden by trees. The road that leads to it is almost a sheep-track, narrow, steep, and rocky--winding all the way under chesnuts by the side of a brawling torrent--the same that watters the Baths of Lucca. So sweetly secluded a place I never before saw, and so entirely without one savage forbidding feature which generally in wild romantic spots, though you admire them, precludes the idea of living in comfort with them. Here on the contrary all invites you to stay. The silence and solitude is soothing and not gloomy because although so grand in its forms, it is softened by such cheerful refreshing hues and tints, and by such varied views, and above all by the looks of home and comfort which the house and its neatness and elegance imparts. Here she lives alone but for Zella; her husband spending his days in Lucca which is about five or six miles off. She passes her time in study--in music languages and embroidery--Heaven forbid that any poet should wander up there and thinking to behold nothing but rocks and sheep, and shepherd boys, light upon this lovely home and meet Madame Bocella with her fairy form and bright intelligent countenance gliding about it and her courteous manners so frank and yet so removed from all that is harsh or bold--I do not think he would ever go away again. It would seem to him that here was the end and aim of his existence; then would he bless all his former crosses and sorrows and understand wherefore they were, since they terminated by his finding such a spot as this, and such an ideal inhabitant in it. To come down from this height

I must tell you that she sends the kindest messages to you and without knowing you already loves you. She has got a portrait of Trelawny[4] --so like--your's is as handsome as he is, but the wildness which is real in him seems in that picture to have been affected in accordance with the costume of the sitter; West's was too smooth and sleek though resembling; her's is Trelawny--and in his most Trelawny mood; his sunken eye gloomy with reverses, but indelibly beaming that intense hardihood and genius which seem to command the whole world and even Fate itself; and then the delicacy of his nostrils and beauty of his lips which contrast so strangely with the severity of his brows, and his capacious forehead and dark thick locks are all to the life. You want to hear of Zella. She is very like him without being nearly so handsome, in her side face you could not mistake whose daughter she is, having seen him; the likeness disappears a good deal when you look at her in front. She is impetuous to the highest degree in her feelings, her cheeks mounting to scarlet on the slightest word; her temper is specifically tyrannical; it is odd to see such a little creature trying upon every occasion to bear down grown people, and enforcing her own will by perpetual battles --overcomming her does not teach her to change; she sulks a moment and then returns with redoubled violence to the attack,

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[4] This portrait, apparently lost, is discussed by Miss Grylls, Trelawny, pp. 73-74.

abusing Madame Bocella and the maids and company present, and even God and her Fate.[5] Of course she looks anything but a child--her bold looks and speech when offended which happens pretty often are what you find in robust men and make you forget those moments of rare occurence when she takes delight in sugar plums or looks timidly upon a stranger. A good education will make a fine character of her and that poor Madame B. sweats sang et eau as the french say, to give her. She abhors application of any kind. Notwithstanding her faults you cannot help liking her; even in her rages she looks so honest you pardon her and when pacific and she smiles, it is so sweet you adore her.

I thank you for all your news of my quondam acquaintances. Poor Julia Burley has taken a rational step.[6] Will you tell me if Mrs. Brereton[7] resembles her son? The Masons are well--I have not seen them these two months and a half nor shall not I believe till the 1st of November. Then how shall I fly to them--Laurette is in the family way--to Mrs. M's horror. Nerina I expect will marry an Italian--a charming young man.[8]

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[5] "My child Zella is growing up very pretty, and with a soul of fire."--Trelawny, Letters, p. 167.

[6] Trelawny's eldest daughter, Maria Julia, married John Burley of the Temple, a man older than herself, but according to Mary Shelley's account thoroughly good natured and estimable.--Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 80.

[7] Mrs. Brereton (or Breredon) was a friend of Trelawny.--Ibid., II, 81.

[8] Nerina married Bartolomeo Cini in the spring of 1834.

I wish she were married for her mother wants entire repose and that she cannot have with a young lively daughter in the house to whom she refuses nothing. Their prejudices against english are founded in reason but carried too far. They condescend to make an exception in my favour always justifying themselves to my great horror by saying I have nothing english about me. Nerina likes nothing in food but meat and potatoes, just two things that Italians abstain from and I teize her much on the subject: and again the Italians they like are just those who are most like the english in manners and opinions. N-- cannot bear the idea of a cavalier servente--she cannot bear a convent education for the girls or a priest as tutor for the boys; she will walk by herself and think for herself --what is all this but english? She however declares it is not. You have never told me anything about Mrs. Leigh and her daughters--neither has anybody else--as she interests me I am curious to hear it--so pray do not forget it.[9] Mrs. L-- was always an enigma to me--she had by her brother's account so much influence over his mind, and yet never exerted it to save him from ruin--Like Livia with the Emperor Augustus her whole occupation seems to have been, to preserve her place in his affections by approving every thing he did, though almost all his actions were in direct opposition to the principles

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[9] As late as 1870 Claire was still curious about Augusta Leigh. See Trelawny, Letters, p. 226.

she professed. I do not like such characters--I shall be told they are natural that such is the weakness of human affection--but still I do not like them, for they feel what I could not feel--affection for one whose principles I do not sympathize with. Conjugal love or sisterly love upon such a system is quite beyond my comprehension. What can two people, wo do not think alike, have to talk about; neither could utter a word without giving rise to a dispute and away flies the little God in a Jiffy--one might as well say that rattling two copper kettles together made lovely music, as say that two people of opposite sentiments can make love together. I suppose you will think I am grown quite french by my taking talking as a foundation for love and say that the English are such a silent nation, conversation is by no means necessary to their affections--I believe you and especially when I revert to Mrs. L-- and her brother--for they must have managed their little affair together without ever interchanging an idea--it must have been quite a passion of the senses--a mute communication of matter with matter according to the law of attraction which draws two pieces of amber to one another without their being able to resist at all, poor things!

This paragraph I am beginning will be devoted to requests. Pay great attention to them and you will do me a favour. I want you to choose three numbers for me, any you please between one and ninety. This is not very fatiguing for you--send me them in the next letter. My second request will cost

you more pains. It is to procure me some Autographs of celebrated english people--Moore, Byron, Godwin, Lord Willington, Canning, Don Pedro, Don Miguel, Bolivar--the latter are not english but they are wanted. It is for an Italian gentleman, a friend of Mrs. Mason's, who has been very kind to me, and teizes me every time he sees me, Mrs. M. having said if Claire writes to Mrs. S-- it is certain she can procure you some. So pray oblige the poor man and do not make me make a cattiva figura in his eyes, which I inevitably shall if you do not send some, now that Mrs. M who is looked upon as an Oracle by him has pronounced this judgement. Ponder well before you either refuse or forget my demand.

Your news of Percy delights me. May all blessings attend him--To how many and those not contemptable is he a star, the only star of Hope that rises upon their stormy horizon. What misery or what happiness to them is vested in his life--So much hanging upon one chance is fearful to think of. I am glad my poor mother is in tolerable health and Godwin in good spirits and that they do not think about the ruin they are threatened with. It would do no good and would most probably not be, for if that place goes, Lord Grey cannot do less than find them another having once extended his protection.[10] I

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[10] In April, 1833, Lord Grey had appointed Godwin to the sinecure post of Yeoman Usher of the Exchequer, with residence at 13 New Palace Yard, a tiny flat under the roof of the Houses of Parliament.

hear from Mr. Bennet[11] that Lord Grey is a cold man but highly honourable. I hope this latter quality will make him not abandon what he has once countenanced. Lord Holland it seems has twice his heart. I have now been a year with the Bennets--and it would be time to know their characters--but I confess myself upon certain points to have gained no sure insight into them, so amazingly sustained is their coldness. I see many contradictory principles and ways of thinking in them--I attribute it to their being Whigs who never can in my mind be a consistent set. The Whigs are a little philosophical, a little religious, a little liberal and a little illiberal, all these pretensions mixed up, make a mish mash, a pot pourri that ends by having no character at all. Save me from the Juste Milieu, it has neither the pleasures of Heaven, nor the pains of hell, but is a Limbo so insignificant so monotonous so powerless and stupid it makes the souls of its inhabitants as characterless as that of an infant that dies before it is born. One thing is certain that Mr. B-- is a Malthusian. I never saw a man so frightened at the populating power inherent in the human race. He does nothing but lament in the most direful strains the excess of population; to hear him, Italy, poor Italy is so crowded with human beings, there is not space left in it for one additional creature. For nothing would he give a sou to a Beggar though he is very humane, so much does

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[11] Claire was a governess in the Bennet household.

he fear they might marry on it. He groans over the chesnut trees loaded with nourishing fruit, and sighs over the fields of India corn and the hedges full of blackberries, thinking how easily the poor will get food and how that facility will set them on marrying. I believe he sees in every blossom that blows, in every blade of grass that sprouts, a new born babe. I have often thought his extraordinary penchant arises from his excessive virtue, and he sacrifices himself to save mankind from what he most dreads, overpopulation. He often tries to inspire the Italians with the danger they are in and the necessity of some laws that might check the torrent that is rising to overwhelm them--they think it is a *Razzia Inglese* and fly off to dance and make love more assiduously than ever. He must respect my childless state and life of celibacy highly.

I am sorry the Gaskells are so blue you cannot amalgamate.[12]

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[12] This Mrs. Gaskell was not the novelist, but Mary Gaskell, the wife of the M.P. She and her husband were good friends of Claire, who on 5 March 1832 had provided them with a letter of introduction to Mary in which she said: "I am delighted to be the means of procuring you the society of such amiable and enlightened people. They are so kind as to esteem Shelley, and so superior in judgement, they do not allow the calumnies and misinterpretations of weak-minded people to diminish their admiration of his genius. . . . I cannot tell you what agreeable hours I passed in their society; unhappily their short stay in Pisa made those hours few, but I thought myself restored to old times, and could almost have fancied Shelley was alive again, they thought and spoke so much in his own style."--Abinger MSS. In the same letter Claire asked Mary to introduce them to Godwin, and his journal reveals that Mrs. Gaskell did visit him in the company of Mary several times in the spring of 1833 and that she was a very regular visitor to New

Jane's new flame is delightful if everyone would be so virtuous as to fall in love with their own husband, half Cupid's empire would go at a blow, and Hymen would become the deity in vogue and saffron robes the only thing worn.[13] Farewell. Remember we go to Pisa the first of November but pray write if you can immediately--you have such heaps of subjects--what your new novel is about[14] what you think of Bulwer's England and the English.[15] The box of books is not yet come--my love to everybody--Be a thousand times blessed.

Claire[16]

Palace Yard throughout that winter and the spring of 1834.--Godwin MSS.

[13] "Jane and Jeff are well--He was sent last Autumn and Winter by Ld. Brougham as one of the Corporation Commissioners. He was away for months and Jane took the opportunity to fall desperately in love with him--she pined and grew ill and wasted away for him."--Mary to Maria Gisborne, 17 July 1834, Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 84.

[14] Mary finished Lodore early in 1833, but it was not published until 1835.

[15] Bulwer-Lytton's England and the English first appeared in September, 1833.

[16] Address: Mrs. Percy B. Shelley / W. Godwin Esq / 13 New Palace Yard / Westminster / London. Readdressed: Mrs. Samberlings / Harrow. Postmark: 30 Sept. 1833. The text is from the original letter, unprinted and unpublished, in the Abinger MSS.

II

Pisa March 9, 1834

My dear Mary,

Heaven only knows why I should write having nothing to say except to thank you for your two last letters.[1] However I'm in the humour and so I'll do it--or rather at my age I ought I believe to say I have come to the conclusion that it is a proper thing to do, and so I do it. Not that carefully examined there exists the slightest difference between the one and the other, but only if you make use of the first expression you throw a certain set of people into a frenzy, whilst if you make use of the second, they cherish you as something quite heroic. The way to succeed with the worldlings is to declare that all your actions great and small, are the result of duty --severe and inexorable duty without a grain of pleasure. If you can only persuade them you are arrived at this supreme pitch of unhappiness they adore and canonize you. I am afraid I am in a very bad way for I love pleasure more and more every day and hate duty worse and worse, most probably because the latter is very familiar to me and the former quite unknown and therefore like beautiful forms we see in dreams, & our hopes of Paradise, inexpressibly dear because not yet brought to the test of reality. Allow me to turn once more to the subject of

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[1] Neither of Mary's letters has been found.

Sir Tim--a most grating one for you and me and the less thought of the better--but really when I heard he was recovered I laughed ready to kill myself Oh! that undying undyable Sir Tim! His jumps towards the grave and then his quick returns to life are too comical. Life and Death are playing at Bob cherry with him poor man. You say he has lived long enough to ruin you I am sure he has me and I give him permission now to live to all Eternity: were I a child I might believe independance could make me happy, but I have seen too much of Life. I know it to be a cheat from beginning to end, affording no happiness either to the Palace or the Cottage. In Death I have much more confidence; it is an ugly but honest creature, without tinsel or gauds, just appearing what it really is and deceiving no one--as far as I know it is the only thing that never deceives in this vast plan of Deceit called the Universe. Such has been my mode of feeling for these last twelve years--considering it is a feeling which they say is subject to change, it has been wonderfully constant--so live, Sir Tim! Hope, without fear, and without belief, bide the time when all that remains of me shall be a few peaceful ashes.

The Masons are pretty well. I believe I wrote to you that Nerina was married about five weeks ago and went instantly to her husband's relations at San Marcello. She returned yesterday--brilliant in beauty health and happiness. How different a return from that of poor Laurette, who came here shortly

after her marriage, pale worn and sad, took to her bed for three weeks and caused us the greatest anxiety.[2] Nerina and I are always as wild as March-hares when together. How she contrives to maintain a small mouth laughing so immensely and perpetually as she does is an enigma. After the first greeting she asked me Well Clary now my honey-moon is over what is to come next? Oh! the Whooping Cough is the next step in matrimony, I replied, at least with respectable people--the husband is the first to have it, feeling strangulated and suffocated about the throat as if someone were tightening a noose around it and the dutiful wife gets it by tending on him. Oh! then I won't be respectable says Nerinette; I'll make an innovation and graft unrespectability upon marriage and see whether poor Mio and I cannot excape this terrible cinchero. In excuse for my reproaching her with not writing to me she protested she had not had a breathing moment since her marriage--in the morning she was dragged up hill and down dale or trotted some twenty miles across the Maremma to see some remarkable spots--and every evening she went to a ball and was danced to death by the innumerable cousins, first and second of the Cini family. Her letters to her mother were all in the following strain--My dear Mother--I am so happy, so happy, but oh so happy--hark! the clock is striking--the post is going out so I must conclude. Five weeks of such letters would have

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[2] Laura's marriage to the Corsican Galloni was ill-starred.

wearied out the patience of any mother but Mrs. Mason; she smiled and said it was the firmest assurance she could receive of her dear Nerina's perfect well-being. Many hours Nerina rattled on yesterday concerning the occurences she had been present at S. Marcello; there were several people present not one of whom could get in a word; she streamed on her way as Sgricci used to do when he improvisavad his tragedies. Sometimes she was herself only, then she represented three or four different people and once even all the guests at a ball, and the wax tapers and silk hangings of the room to boot; our attentions were absorbed by her; not only on account of her extreme vivacity but also enraptured by the excessive beauty of that vivacity. The animation of an Italian is often rough and course, but hers notwithstanding its intenseness, is yet graceful and soft. Had one had a hundred eyes they would have been all too few to follow the variety of her gestures, or to drink in the glowing beauty of her presence. Her husband was there and stared at her the whole time with a look of delight as if he had never set eyes on her before and as if overcome by satisfaction at the vision he saw--she on her side, though often raving to us about his goodness and other perfections, never addressed a word or a glance to him during the whole time. I believe she thought he was at Leghorn. She is in such a state of exaltation she knows nothing she does. The other day passing through a room she saw a man standing near the window--his back was turned--of course it

must be Meo--for there is only one Man in the world and he is Meo--she flies up to him, folds her arms around his neck and leans her head on his shoulder--the Man turns round and she beholds a tall red haired youth of nineteen, a cousin, a new acquaintance--in every respect unlike Meo. With a look of horror and doubtless some small disgust in it, down falls Nerinette with a shudder upon the ground.

I rejoice in your friendship for Jane, who is sincerely attached to you: do not let the barrier of folly for a moment raised between you prevail. How can you expect dear Mary, not to be traduced by your friends? What mortal can you point out, either alive or dead, that was so privileged? Neither genius, nor goodness, the two principal exciters of love, can preserve from this evil. Accept of friendship all that it has of sweet and bury the rest in oblivion. I had once a friend whom I loved entirely and who certainly loved me much; yet immense were the lies he told of me: I regard this not--he was great and above all pure minded and I love him still as if he had never spoken ill of me: to be sure he told me himself in his calm voice that it was absolutely necessary he should traduce me and that he expected I should submit without a murmur to it--and I do with the greatest cheerfulness. So much frankness and honour would redeem any calumny let it take what root it may--and besides one feels ennobled by being the victim of necessity. I wish I could be as pleased with the lies told to me as with those told of me; but that is quite a

different case, for the first lead you to the conduct you ought perhaps of all others to avoid for your own repose, whilst the latter have no effect on one's conduct at all. To return to Jane: I have a great attachment for her and perfectly disinterested--she does not love me--partly by her being so absorbed by her affection to Edward's memory no other thing can obtain place in her heart. And partly because she has but a very imperfect notion of my character and sentiments. She has seen too little of me to be well acquainted with me. You, she and Trelawny are all in error in your opinion of me. I confess to loving you all three beyond anything else except Mrs. Mason and Percy, and I confess that it is a great blot upon my character that I have given myself but little pains to chance your ideas on my account--my excuse is my indolence --I abhor contradicting and contesting. You live--you are-- that is enough for my happiness--you are all illustrious in your different ways. I pay a silent tribute of my admiration and love--and that is enough for my conscience. When I am with you no one enjoys or appreciates more the blessing of your society; You make a remark that is worth twenty books were they Plato's or Bacon's; Trelawny enchants me by some immense piece of unworldliness, Jane with her refined sentiments and graceful manner of uttering them; when I am away from you I recollect all these, and quite forget to regret your absence. I do not envy you the prospect of John Shelley's acquaintance--they say he is very like Shelley and very stupid

--now think what torture it would be to see someone like Shelley talking nonsense--you'll faint away Mary--don't see him--it is too horrid.

You say you cannot write to me because you don't know what to put in your letters--Tell me what you can of Miss Landon Mrs. Norton and Mrs. Hemans--I am delighted with all three;[3] pray mention if they are pretty and their ages and all details of their persons, so that when I read their works I may have their forms before me. You must know about literary people just those whom I know nothing of and that I desire most to know. Politics are also welcome to me--no one here dares say a word about them--we live in utter ignorance on that point--a little whisper coming now and then, and instead of dispelling encreasing our ignorance. Such a one I heard lately--that England was at war with Russia and our fleet under Sir Billy Somebody (what a name for a commander) had blockaded and finally blown up St. Petersburgh. Is this true? Is Peter the Great's city destroyed by a Baronet with the

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[3] Letitia Landon (L.E.L.), Caroline Norton, and Felicia Hemans were among Mary's acquaintance at the time. Claire's admiration of them was of no great depth or longevity, for less than a year later she wrote to reassure Mary that when all the "flimsy authors" of the preceding fifty years had been forgotten her name and Shelley's would be "the great luminaries of posterity." After consigning Byron, Scott, and Southey to the dustbin she continued down the list: "Who then, think you, will interest themselves about a Mrs. Norton, a Miss Landon, a Lytton Bulwer, who with all their talent, their great eloquence, could never feel beyond the feeling of the day in which they lived, and were as much bigots to the error of that day, as Saint Ignatius was of his."--Abinger MSS., 6 November 1835.

Christian name of Billy?

What bad news you give of your Aunt--Your trials are really too much Nothing is falser than that proverb--"after a storm comes fine weather when applied to Adversity. One misfortune draws another as fog draws fog. Have a single mischance in Life and the tenour of your future days is settled. I have had a visit from Jane Bocella--she is near her confinement of her first child and her health is bad--she has been much tormented by the bad state of her brother in law's affairs.[4] He has been at open war with his wife a foolish little woman who contrived to mix poor Jane in the quarrel and that in a way peculiarly galling. The Husband and Wife by the intervention of friends are going to make it up; where there is so little love on either side that is no difficult matter; they will appear at the theatre together, Cesare will shawl her on going out, and after such a specimen of conjugal good-will who is to imagine that they hate and avoid each other at home. It will not be so easy to cure the injuries Jane has received both public and private; she has learned to distrust what she once trusted and she repines at bearing blame which she does not merit. As she is yet young she is amazingly impatient under her sufferings. Her position in Life though seemingly flourishing is the most comfortless,

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[4] Jane Boccella's brother-in-law was the eminent poet and minister of education, Cesare Boccella. See above, p. 153.

uncheered and disconsolate. I rack my brain in vain. I do not see any cure. She has not strength of character enough to live without the pale of society and has too much strength and integrity of heart to like living within it. If she could be removed to England she might recover a portion of happiness --but Lucca is such a horrible uncongenial place for one of her stamp. Thank you for all your information of Mr. Bulwer-- I told what you said was proper to be told of him--You forgot to mention if he has children. Do you know the witty Rosina Is she beautiful as well as witty. Do you happen to know if they came abroad some years ago and passed a winter at Nice under the name of Lloyd. When I was there I got acquainted with a family of that name--they were very amiable and the man seemed distinguished but very reserved. I thought no more about them till a little while ago a french correspondent of mine wrote to me--Do you recollect the Lloyds at Nice--Imagine a little he was Mr. Bulwer the author travelling incog with his family. As my informant is the most heedless of creatures I think some English wag has been amusing himself with her credulity.[5] I must say Goodbye. Of course I send love to every one. Write--write anything and believe me

Ever Your Affectionate

Claire

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[5] This rumor, like the tale of Sir Billy Somebody, appears to have no foundation whatsoever.

I must put in a word of my health to satisfy my mother. I am very well my only grievance now being fits of ear-ach. I do not think you would know me again I am grown so fat and so ruddy.[6]

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[6] *Address*: Mrs. Shelley / Harrow on the Hill / Middlesex / England / Angleterre. *Postmark*: 26 March 1834. The text is from the original letter, unprinted and unpublished, in the Abinger MSS.

Appendix H

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT'S BREAK WITH MARY SHELLEY

The purpose of this appendix is to supply, with only the briefest comment, the major sources which mirror the relationship between Mary and Claire during the last years of Mary's life. In one case the mirror is dimmed with age and offers at best the reflection of a reflection; in another, the glass is brilliant but crazed, providing a vivid but distorted reflection. Unfortunately they are the only sources one has to go by in reconstructing the last act of the half-century-long drama in which Mary and Claire played the feminine leads.

1

The best-known account of the end of Mary's relationship with Claire is in a little volume by Maud Rolleston, the

daughter of the Reverend Stopford Brooke.[1] Mrs. Rolleston dated her acquaintance with Lady Shelley from 1894, more than forty-two years after Mary's death. This long interval must not be overlooked in an examination of Mrs. Rolleston's volume. Although she reported word-by-word conversations as if she had been on hand with a stenographer's notebook, everything she recorded was received second hand at this very late date from a woman who idolized Mary Shelley, her mother-in-law, and who admittedly disliked Claire Clairmont intensely.

Since Mrs. Rolleston's report is widely quoted out of context and not easily available as a whole, I supply here the complete text of the passage under discussion, entering some editorial comment in square brackets. The author is directly quoting Lady Shelley throughout:

> You ask me what became of Charles Clairmont; he lived in Vienna as tutor to a family [The "family" was that of the Hapsburg heir to the throne, Franz Joseph]. He married afterwards and had many children, who were all impressed with the same idea as their Aunt Claire (Jane) that the Shelleys, their house and belongings, were theirs too [Cf. the discussion above, pp. 157-158. Claire was induced to visit ~~Claire~~ Mary and to bring the children only under protest.] I heard one day from Mary that Claire was coming to stay at Field Place. I felt I could not stay in the same house with her for she got on my nerves. I had often met her before my marriage and I disliked her, so I said to Mary I would leave home for a little. At this she burst out in a vehement manner, 'Don't go dear; don't leave me alone with her. She has been the bane of my life ever since I was two!' I gladly staid. [The probability of this much-quoted expression in spirit if not in word is supported by Mary's own statement in her letters of invitation to Claire that Field Place would be insufferably dull without Percy and

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[1] Talks With Lady Shelley (London, 1925).

Jane around.] Claire came with her niece Clairey. She had not been long in the house when Clairey came rushing up to my room, flung herself on the floor at my feet, clasped my hands, and said, 'Save me from her, save me from my aunt; she is kneeling on the floor of the drawing room cursing me. I left her like that, and I know she is cursing me still.'

'What is the matter?' I said.

'Oh, I think she is mad. She says I must write to my mother and tell her I am engaged to be married, and a little while later I must write and say I am married, and a little while after that I must write and say I am a widow.'

'But why?' I asked, trying not to laugh.

'Well, she says no girls are independent here in England till after they are married, and as she does not want to be troubled with me she says I must tell my mother I am married, and so on. I refused to do it, and she is downstairs cursing me!'

I knew that Mary had heard all. She was ill at the time, so I went to her and said, 'Darling, I am going to lock you into your room, because if you hear any noise or trouble going on you are certain to get out in order to try to relieve it, so you must stay here till I come back.'

I went down and found Claire as her niece had said, so, lifting her up, I said: 'You are very ill, come to bed at once.' My manner being very impressive and stern, she came. I was obliged to sit by her for some hours trying to calm her. At last, towards the late afternoon, I left her and sent my maid to her, telling her she would get her what was required, and on going downstairs I found Percy trying to manage Clairey, who was sobbing hysterically. The whole house was upturned. The maid soon came down, followed by Claire, who said that she would not be left in the hands of strangers, and instantly began in a wild half-mad manner to say all kinds of horrid things. With difficulty I got her upstairs again and in a loud voice told the groom to go instantly for the doctor, and to tell him that as Miss Clairmont was very ill and excited he must bring some drug to cure her. I meant her to hear, and understanding the meaning of it she instantly called out she was better. After that, thank goodness, we had peace for a while. But there were many upheavals in the house when Claire was with us.[2]

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[2] *Ibid*., pp. 40-45.

The scene described by Mrs. Rolleston is so much "in the Clairmont manner" that it has been generally accepted as true in essence. A memory so vivid in its detail after an interval of nearly a half century was almost certainly founded on some actual situation. One does not have to search far for an event which may well have touched it off. Claire's own letters about this fateful visit to Field Place show that she reacted in a manner which can only be described as demented to Clary's sudden marriage to Percy Florence's handsome young friend Alexander Knox.

Maud Rolleston does actually go on to give an account of the marriage, but she does not connect it in any way with Claire's tantrum, nor does she mention Claire in relationship with it at all. Yet we know that, irked by Clary's insouciant denial of her authority and infuriated by Mary's role of accomplice in foisting off what Claire was convinced was one of her ex-beaus on the child, Claire reacted with hysterical rage. One has merely to imagine the scene described by Lady Shelley to Mrs. Rolleston as part of the fracas after Clary's secret marriage and even if it does not appear the behavior of a mentally balanced woman, it is at least consistent with Claire's behavior as described in her own letters.

ii

For a first-hand account of the row over Clary's wedding, we must turn to Claire's letters and the letters of the young

people, Clary Knox and her brother Willy, written at or about this time.[3]

The earliest letters are, surprisingly enough, two from Clary herself, both to her Aunt Claire, one dated 18 June 1849 and the other 9 July of the same year. Both are polite, charming, and happy, without a hint of disrespect. A third letter from Clary, dated 24 July, is to her brother Willy. "As to the inquiry you seem so very anxious to make me answer," she says, "my aunt must be very well aware that I never told her Lady Shelley had spoken ill of her--because it is not true." Despite this peevish note, she sends her "kindest remembrances" to Claire. There is no sign here or in Willy's letters (see above, pp. 174-175) of the hysteria described by Mrs. Rolleston nor any reflection of the white-hot indignation which Claire apparently felt.

The children could afford to shoulder Claire's disapproval lightly, but the full burden of that self-righteous indignation fell upon their mother, Antonia ("Tonie") Clairmont. When Tonie admitted that she had written to Mary Shelley, Claire reproached her: "Oh! Tonie, Tonie is it possible that you can be so devoid of all due pride, as to hold any communication with Mrs. S after the bitter contempt she has shewn our family last year?" She charged that "Mrs. Shelley, a mother herself, instigated Clary to outrage every law of

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[3] These letters are all among the Clairmont MSS.

natural tenderness, every filial duty, every family tie." She went on to deplore Tonie's honest doubt of the truth of Claire's charges about the relations which had existed between Knox and Mary Shelley. Claire stated that for proof she had shown to Pauline (Paola) some of Mary's letters which made the matter clear. "Be pleased therefore to write to Paola and ask her if after what she has seen in Mrs. Shelley's hand-writing, she has any doubt of the sort of intimacy that existed between them."[4]

Claire's fullest statement of her point of view in the family feud which she had nursed into being is in a letter to Tonie written in 1853, four years after the marriage. The letter stands by itself as a painful testimony of Claire's state of mind and of the appalling longevity of her animosity. It is included here complete:

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[4] I believe that the letters here referred to are the letters from Mary to Claire at the time when Knox was in Paris on the trail of Mary's letters to Gatteschi (see above, pp. 165-167). These letters bear Claire's MS endorsements calling attention to Knox's weaknesses and to Mary's expressions of endearment. See, for instance, Letters of Mary W. Shelley, II, 231: "Talks of Knox and of his smoking and want of manly courage." Or ibid., II, 253: "She calls Mr. Knox my Knox." An objective reader of these letters does not find them in the least incriminating. On the other hand, Claire's use against Mary of these disarmingly affectionate and ingenuous letters appears as a shocking breach of friendship and a violation of the strictest confidence. Mary was deeply ashamed of her behavior over Gatteschi, but Claire not only showed the letters about among her family, but eventually had Pauline make copies of many of them (the copies in the Berg Collection are in Pauline's hand, not Claire's).

6 Waverley Place
St John's Wood
Sept 6th 1853

My dear Tonie

I write to you again on the subject of the regret you expressed in your last letter that there should be feuds in the family. You have always seemed to think that the estrangement that exists was by my fault. I do not agree with you on this point. I think you allow your partiality for your daughter to get the better of your judgement, when you throw the blame of the quarrel on me. It is extremely disagreeable to me to be thought ill of, when I do not merit it. I have been so surprised at many expressions you have written, and by much in your conduct toward me, that it has often struck me, you are ignorant of all that happened, or may have forgotten it entirely. I think that were all the circumstances that took place present to your mind, you would say, that it was quite impossible for me to act otherwise than I have acted. The moment your daughter declared she would marry Mr. Knox, she altered completely to me; every moment of the day that she had to spare from Knox, was devoted to shewing towards me an excess of coarse insolence that no lady ever practices, under whatever provocations; not knowing that she intended to marry Mr. Knox after seven days courtship, I bore with her impertinence and contempt, hoping that in a week or fortnight her ill-humour would abate, and leave her open to better, more

practical impulses. She owed a strong debt of gratitude to me, and I very natu[rally] imagined that in time she would recollect that petty malicious speeches, taunts upon my misfortune, and sulky refusals to hold conversation with me, were not the proper return for my kindness to her. However she gave herself no time for repentance, or duty to her parents, or consideration for the feelings for others, or deference for the common decencies of life; she had Knox all day long by her side, I never offered offered [*sic*] the least hinderance to their intercourse; she did just what she liked; notwithstanding these gratifications to her wishes; she seemed to think Heaven knows what--that she must marry him *then* and *there*, after a week's courtship, *directly*, that very day, and that very hour, and she put on her bonnet and walked off to marry Knox as if she had been going shopping. She returned home and Knox informed me they were married. I still was forbearing--I made them no reproaches--I considered them both insane; that it would be better to let their insanity evaporate--and I said nothing--but still hoped that in a month or so that they would return to reason, and be sorry for the violent selfish part they had acted and make an apology for it. I went to Molling [?] and from thence to Brighton with Willy for sea bathing for his glands: at Brighton I received a letter from my Brother saying that he had written a letter to Clary reproaching her for her hasty marriage: asking her how she could be so unfeminine and so indelicate as to marry

a man she scarcely knew at all and without a single relation by her side to counsel or assist her: telling her moreover that he should never write to her again till she was reconciled to me. He further informed me that [line crossed out and illegible] Clary had answered his letter, and endeavoured to excuse her conduct by saying "the Shelleys had urged her to marry him without the smallest delay." Upon which my Brother wrote to Mrs. S. and reproached her with inciting his daughter to disobedience and disrespect to her Parents. Mrs. S--never returned any answer--only Knox wrote to him a long letter full of vituperation of me. When Clary's honeymoon was over, Willy at my request wrote to Clary, and told her that my feelings had been exceedingly wounded by her insolent speeches and conduct, and I certainly hoped that now she had had her fling she would reflect upon her errors and express her regret to me with the assurance that I should never meet again from her such infeeling and indecorous rudeness. Her answer was as follows--"they want to make mischief between us!" This is the only observation she deigned to make upon my wounded feelings--the rest of the letter was upon indifferent subjects. By the word "they" she of course meant me. Such is the evil minded mean way, in which she interprets my innocent actions and wishes. During the week before her marriage with K-- one day struck with the violent hostility of her manner towards me, the hatred that was expressed in her countenance; conscious that I had done nothing to merit

dislike, having been as tender and indulgent to her as if she had been my Child, struck by her very extraordinary uncalled for behavior, it suddenly flashed into my mind, "this girl's mind has been poisoned against me--she never could hate me with this fury I having been all kindness to her, unless someone had set her against me. So after a moment's silence I said--Clary some one has been speaking ill of me to you--was it Mrs. Shelley--No she said--Mrs. Shelley never said any ill of you--was it Lady Shelley I then enquired--Yes she said Lady Shelley spoke ill of you. The entrance of Knox interrupted the conversation and she married the day after so I never had any opportunity of renewing it. But when her honey moon was over, and I deemed her restored to the ordinary routine of life, Willy at my request wrote to her as follows: that I had seen with great regret that Lady Shelley by evil stories had poisoned her mind against me; that I entreated her to communicate to me what Lady Shelley had said, as I had no doubt I could explain things to my justification. To this your daughter answered with her usual insolence; that she was surprised at my request as Lady S-- had never spoken ill of me, and that I must be very well aware it was not true. I will now ask you Tonie, what you think of such expressions: am I wrong in saying that no lady or any one beyond a maid servant, ever addresses such language to another lady. Subsequently in conversation to Willy, she owned that Lady S-- had spoken ill of me, but would not tell what, only saying it

was about little things not worth mentioning. If you, Tonie, doubt my statements be so kind as to refer to Willy--he knows every word of what passed, and will corroborate what I here state, as God well knows every word I have put down is true. I then had only that course to pursue, which all people must pursue who are accused of falsehood, and refused every occasion of justifying themselves--I could only retire from Mrs. Knox. I could not expose myself to her vulgarity and violence any more. We will suppose I had misunderstood Mrs. Knox in what she said concerning Lady S-- all may make mistakes--any one is liable to run away with false impressions--had that been the case; but with Mrs. Knox's usual evilmindedness as regards me instead of answering as any other lady would have answered--"indeed you must have mistook my meaning, for Lady S. never spoke ill of you, or only on such trifling points as are not worth mentioning," instead of answering in this manner, she seized the opportunity of insulting me, and that in such a coarse and violent form, as made it quite impossible for me to acknowledge her as an acquaintance even. Had she on the contrary possessed that candour of character and that graceful humility which most young people of her age possess, and written me what it was her duty to have written.--Indeed dear Aunt, I am extremely sorry that I have ever been the occasion of wounding your feelings; I never meant to do so, and shall certainly avoid doing so again."--all would have been right--repentance must always be accepted--one must be vile

indeed to reproach a person who owns their fault--all would have gone smoothly. But no--what can be anything but a storm, a sorrow, a misery where she has thing to do in it? [sic] By her violence, her stubborn determination to insult and to crush me, she forced me to separate from Willy; he was young, required near him someone he could respect, someone he could feel confident in to guide him in the difficulties of youth. What confidence could he have in me, whilst his Sister was openly stigmatizing me to him with every opprobious quality. Nothing is so injurious to young people as to despise those who are their guides--I saw the peril; that his further stay with me was fraught with every danger to his principles, and with misery and dissatisfaction to myself. I resigned myself to the evil fortune Mrs. Knox had brought upon me, in return for my unwearied kindness and separated from him. There is no end to her insolence and rudeness--when Paola came, she asked her sister in my name to give me news of Mrs. Shelley and whether she was well--I asked for nothing more--I did not even ask where she was--Mrs. Knox apparently incapable of conceiving that an old friend can in spite of differences, feel anxious to hear of the happiness of that old friend, instantly fired up into one of her furies and said sharply to Pauline--"I know her motive I won't tell her anything about Mrs. Shelley." I had a long illness in the Autumn after her marriage--brought on by worry, time of life, extreme grief at Clary's ingratitude--Willy was with me and saw her

most days, and told her how much I was suffering; which she received in perfect silence or with a distasteful shrug of her shoulders, and if he did not mention me, never enquired after me. Willy himself was perfectly astounded at the traits of cruelty and more than utter want of all feeling she shewed; and being a woman and so young it strikes you with double horror. It might very likely be attempted to justify her conduct on the ground that she acted under the influence of her husband; but I think even granted she did, it scarcely diminishes her fault at all. Had she had proper feelings no persuasion of her husband would have been able to make her unnatural, cruel, wantonly inhuman. It was in her power, a young married wife, adoring her husband, and he adoring her as she says, to have influenced him to a mild and proper behavior. As far as I have seen, I think I may very safely say that she took the greatest delight in torturing, plaguing and tormenting me. I could state a great many more things against her; but I think I have said enough for my purpose, which was to justify myself from being the blameable party in the quarrel; I think I have made clear, that I never wished, never sought to be at enmity with them; on the contrary it was always painful to me; they wished it--she was ashamed to see me knowing how vilely in many points she had betrayed my confidence; and he was in a regular fury, accustomed as he is to be admired (which he certainly has every right to be as he is handsome, clever, and very attractive when he chooses) to find such a poor

insignificant creature as me, wished my niece not to marry him; and the consequence has been a series of the most wanton unfeeling insults to me. They have very nearly killed me; the depressed mind I bore for two years almost turned me crazy: but it pleased God to avert this misfortune from me; and moreover by his gracious mercy, in raising me up kind considerate friends who poured balm into my bleeding heart, I have recovered a considerable portion of my spirits and that cheerful temper which is natural to me; never alas! can one wholly recover the dreadful usage I have received at their hands--how hope in human nature, when one's own niece acts like a fiend towards me--how hope for gratitude, how wish or endeavor to make others happy, when Mrs. Knox, to whom I gave my heart, my purse, my faculties, my powers, all all I had, has repaid me with the bitterest ingratitude, torn the old friend of my youth from me after five and forty years that we had stood together, sent that poor friend to a too early grave, and done all she could to make me insane with griefs. Oh! no! such injuries it is our duty to forgive--but we never can forget them--as soon forget the serpent that has inflicted a mortal wound; or forget the guillotine that has destroyed some one dearest to one's heart. You cannot ask me to seek insult--why should I do it? I have only done what you yourself would have done had you been in my place--retire from people who treat you as if you were the dirt under your feet. Exonerate me therefore from blame. Place it where it ought to rest; on

your daughter. I have told you but half her insults; but quite sufficient I think to shew you that it is impossible for me to have intercourse with her. Had she felt sincere grief for the misery and wrong she has done me, and expressed it, that would of course have altered my conduct and my feelings. Now certainly as regards yourself, I have been deeply wounded by your conduct in these affairs: I do not think you have acted a sisterly part towards me; quite the contrary: you were in duty bound to defend me from Mrs. Knox's insults; [line crossed out and illegible] most mothers would have insisted with their child that she should abandon a line of conduct so thoroughly ungrateful; but you never even attempted a remonstrance; on the contrary you acted as if you were Mrs. Knox's daughter and she was your Mother; and that it would be quite out of keeping in you to criticize the actions of one so much older and wiser than yourself.

[unsigned][5]

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[5] For a further discussion of this letter, see Chapter II.

Appendix I

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT'S WILL

Among the Clairmont manuscripts is the following copy of Claire's will. It is endorsed at the end: "The above is a retranslation into English from the authenticated German translation of Aunt Claire's will found on her death with Mr. Cini. Vienna 25 June 1879. W.G.Clairmont."

I Claire Maria Constantia Jane Clairmont spinster now residing in Florence 43 Via Romana and being of sound mind and memory declare this to be my last will and testament

I elect my dear friend Bartholomew Cini, who for so long a time has enjoyed the esteem of all his friends to be the executor of my will entreating him to undertake this office, feeling well assured that otherwise no respect would be paid to my last will. As a token of my gratitude for all the sympathy, which he and his dear departed wife have shown me for more than forty years, I bequeath to him the ink stand with which

I always write and is the same with which Shelley the poet wrote many of his poems begging him to have it preserved in his family as an heirloom in memory of one of the most exalted minds that ever breathed. I further leave to the care of the said B. Cini a tin box containing letters directed by Shelley the poet partly to Godwin the philosopher, partly to me, and a hundred or more letters from Mrs. Shelley Shelley the poet's wife to me, 36 letters from Trelawny to me, two letters from Sir Percy the poet's son written at the time when he was young, two small and first poetical trials and some doggerel verses by the dowager Lady Mountcashell Cini's mother in law describing in a humorous manner the qualities of Shelley the poet which made him appear in the eyes of the world as His Satanic Majesty. And in short I leave all my papers to the care of B. Cini and beg him to sell all the letters from Shelley to Godwin or to me, as well as all Shelley's letters or Mrs. Shelley's letters to me or others as well as the letters from Trelawny to me and to invest t~~o~~he proceeds in 5 percent Italian national rent in such a manner that only the interest of those stock [sic] shall be paid to my niece Paula Clairmont and after her death the whole amount shall go to my dear Georgina Haughigni who is living with me. The copies of all letters from Shelley or Mrs. Shelley to me I bequeath to my niece Paula begging her to preserve those copies with great care as they would prove of great value in case of the destruction of the originals. All my other I leave to Cini that

they may be preserved by his family. All my furniture plate linen and books I bequeath to my niece Paula Clairmont begging her to leave them after her death to Georg. Haughigni. In a secret shelf of my press will be found 25 books of the municipality of Trieste; these I leave to the care of B. Cini and destine them for my niece P.C. The interest amounting to about £15 shall be paid to her every year, but she shall not have any right to touch the capital which is to go after her death to Georg. Haughigni. In the savings bank will be found after my death the sum of 1200 lire; these shall pay my funeral expenses which shall on no account exceed this sum. The libretto of the savings bank bearing the number 186 B 12 will be found in my strong box. Any amount above the said 1200 lire I leave for the private use of my niece Paula.

I wish to be interred at Antilla in a coffin of oak and the following words in English to be inscribed on my tomb:

> In misery she spent her life expiating not only her
> faults but also her virtues.

To my dear and beloved Cini I leave the care for my funeral, requesting him or his son John to see fulfilled this my last wish, and express to him and his excellent sons my deep gratitude for all their considerations for me.

This is my last will and testament to which I sign my name this the 2nd day of December 1876

Clara Maria Constantia Jane Clairmont .

My dear B. Cini having departed from this life his son John

has consented to become the executor of my testament. I name him as such thanking him deeply for his kindness.

July 21st 1877 Clara Maria Constantia Jane Clairmont

In 1871 little Georgina Haughigni, Pauline's illegitimate daughter, had come into the Florentine household, and Claire's desire to adopt the child had been frustrated by Pauline's refusal. Two years later Claire began her campaign to raise money to support and educate the girl as though she were her own. Trelawny offered her £50 for her Shelley letters, but Claire did not in the least underestimate the potential value of her papers and she turned him down.[1] In return she offered him for the £50 Shelley's inkstand, a portion of his ashes (which she had received originally from Trelawny himself), and a number of other items including some of Trelawny's own letters to her. Quite understandably he was not interested.[2]

In 1875 Trelawny told Claire about Mrs. Elliot, the wife of the Dean of Bristol, who would have dealt with her for her Shelley papers; "but from the enormous price you asked, or set upon them, she thought you mad: neither Byron or Shelley are now known except to the few--two generations have passed."[3] Claire refused to compromise, however, and, as her will shows,

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[1] Letters, p. 241.

[2] William Michael Rossetti, "Talks With Trelawny," The Athenaeum, no. 2857 (5 August 1882), p. 177.

[3] Letters, pp. 247-248.

maintained to the end of her life her passionate faith in the eventual recognition of Shelley's genius.

In 1876, before she drew up her will in its final form, the form printed above, Claire asked Bartolomeo Cini to attempt to sell her Shelley letters to a certain Bond, through the intermediary of Cini's acquaintance Panizzi. She needed the money, she told him, not for herself, but to give Georgina a respectable education. "For myself I would not sell my letters--" she wrote, "but to benefit Georgie."[4] But Panizzi was not able to negotiate the sale, and Claire's papers and mementos were still in her possession at the time of her death.

One of the most pathetic aspects of Claire's will is her conviction that her wishes would not be carried out unless one of the Cinis were executor. Ironically enough, Bartolomeo's son, Giovanni Cosimo Cini, immediately resigned the executor's job to Pauline, the very eventuality Claire had gone to such extremes to avoid.[5] She entered immediately into correspondence with Silsbee about Claire's letters, but by the end of July recorded in her journal, "he wrote to say he could not give the price that I asked for the letters--& begged to withdraw from the contest. If Mr. N. knew what a heroic step I took to secure him the letters, his devotion to

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[4] Cini MSS., partially printed in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 287.

[5] Berg MSS., New York Public Library, letter from Charles Fairfax Murray to Henry Buxton Forman, 10 July 1879.

me would be in proportion to his desire of having the letters."[6] Mr. N. was Henry Roderick Newman, who was in Florence as an agent for Henry Buxton Forman. Newman's letters to Forman reveal that Silsbee had been on hand in June in a desperate attempt to obtain the Shelley letters for himself. "Old Silsbee came to see me last night in great anguish & tried to bully me but it was no use," he wrote and added in another letter that Silsbee had sworn to Pauline that he'd have the letters.[7]

At the end of June, 1879, Newman turned his job over to Charles Fairfax Murray, a pupil of Burne-Jones. On 10 July Murray reported to Forman that he had paid £150 for the papers, but that although Pauline wanted to keep it, the inkstand was to go to Cini. He took the precaution of locking the whole collection up so that Silsbee, who was still poking around, should not get hold of anything.[8] "Silsbee has some mysterious hold upon her. I am sure she is frightened of him, because she said she was not," reported Murray. On 30 July the sale was concluded, officially to Newman. By 18 November the letters of Mrs. Godwin to Lady Mountcashell had still not been found; both the originals and the copies made by Pauline (not by Claire, as has been supposed) were lost.

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[6] Clairmont MSS., 31 July 1879.

[7] Berg MSS., 18 June 1879, 24 June 1879.

[8] Berg MSS., 10 July 1879.

Pauline claimed that Silsbee had actually succeeded in stealing them.[9]

The process of checking the ultimate fate of the papers and articles itemized in the will and in the inventory of things purchased by Forman is long and involved. The history of the Shelley letters is in De Ricci's bibliography.[10] Mary's letters came to rest eventually in the Huntington Library; the copies of some of these, in Pauline's neat hand, are in the Berg Collection. Pauline did not observe Claire's wish that she herself preserve the copies, for she sold all of them to Forman along with the originals.[11] After the death of Henry Buxton Forman, most of his collection was put up for sale in one lot and was purchased by Mr. Stetson, of hat fame. There were many items Stetson did not want to keep, so that when the collection reached New York the whole was put up for auction at the Anderson Galleries, and Stetson then bought all he wanted. There were five Clairmont lots, but no record was kept of the purchasers.[12] Some of the papers remained in the

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[9] Berg MSS., Newman to Forman, 18 November 1879. Forman eventually obtained the copies, but to the best of my knowledge the originals have really vanished.

[10] Seymour De Ricci, A Bibliography of Shelley's Letters (privately printed, 1927).

[11] I am indebted to Mr. Forman for lending these copies to me and for providing me with the later history of his father's collection. He has promised to lend me whatever papers I wish from his collection, and I am still in hopes of seeing them.

[12] The Library of the Late H. Buxton Forman, Part I [Part II, etc.] (New York, The Anderson Galleries, 1920).

possession of Maurice Buxton Forman and were used by Miss Grylls in the preparation of her Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont.[13]

Of all the items in Claire's will, Shelley's inkstand was the least appreciated. It was the well from which Shelley had written Queen Mab, and Claire had begged it of Mary as an only souvenir. William Michael Rossetti remembered seeing it when he visited Claire in Florence. In spite of Claire's earnest desire that it be kept perpetually in the Cini family, Pauline had arranged an exchange by which she received the inkstand and the Cinis obtained from her Claire's portrait of Lady Mountcashell. For ten years Pauline's attempts to sell the stand were reflected in her correspondence with Forman. She hoped that he or Dowden or Furnivall would want it badly enough to pay her price. In 1887 she thought she had found a customer, but he failed her. Finally, in 1890, she offered it to Forman as a gift--a gift which he very gladly accepted. His eleven years of patience had been rewarded.[14]

Claire's wishes as to her burial were carried out scrupulously.[15] Of Georgina Haughigni for whom she provided so carefully nothing whatsoever can be discovered. Her existence was never mentioned in the Clairmont family.

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[13] See especially Claire Clairmont, pp. 262-280.

[14] Pauline's letters to Forman are in the Berg Collection.

[15] For an account of Claire's tomb, see Grylls, Claire Clairmont, p. 243.

Appendix J

AN INDEX TO THE KNOWN LETTERS OF CLAIRE CLAIRMONT

The manuscripts of Claire Clairmont's letters are to be found in the following collections:

Collection	Short title
1. The Shelley family papers in the possession of Lord Abinger, Clees Hall, Bures, Suffolk. These are the papers referred to by Miss Grylls as Boscombe MSS.A.	Abinger MSS.
2. Letters from Claire to Byron in the possession of Sir John Murray, 50 Albemarle Street, London.	Murray MSS.
3. Clairmont papers in the possession of Maurice Buxton Forman, Pretoria, South Africa. In this group I have not been able to distinguish between MSS held by Forman today and those which have been sold. The letters referred to are those listed by Miss Grylls as C.P.	Forman MSS.
4. Clairmont papers in the possession of Dr. Walter Clairmont, Gauting bei München, Germany.	Clairmont MSS.
5. Claire's letters to Bartolomeo and Tommaso Cini, in the possession of the Farina-Cini family of Florence.	Cini MSS.

Collection	Short title
6. Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Ashley and Egerton collections.	Ashley MSS. Egerton MSS.
7. One letter in the Bodleian Library.	Bodleian MS. Shelley
8. One letter in the library of the University of Texas, Austin, Texas.	Texas MS.

These manuscripts, of course, have been at one time or another available to scholars, but only the collections of the Bodleian and the British Museum have been so easily accessible that their Clairmont letters have been carefully edited and published. The principal scholars who have been admitted to the private collections and who have published letters or excerpts from letters by Claire are as follows:

Scholar	Work or Works Containing Clairmont Letters	MSS. Used
Mrs. Julian Marshall	*Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*	Abinger
Edward Dowden	*Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*	Abinger, Forman, Murray
Rowland E. Prothero	*Letters and Journals of George Gordon, Lord Byron*, Vols. III and V	Murray
Rosalie Glynn Grylls	*Mary Shelley* *Claire Clairmont*	Abinger, Cini, Forman, Murray, (Clairmont, at second hand)
George Paston and Peter Quennell	*To Lord Byron*	Murray

The above list is not intended to be complete, merely to be a guide to the index which follows. One other source, printed but not published, deserves to be mentioned. This is Shelley and Mary, the four-volume collection of materials from the Abinger MSS.

My purpose in this list is to present a complete index of Claire Clairmont letters known to me and to indicate whether they have been printed or published, in whole or in part. A notice of partial publication may refer to only a line or two. I have not attempted to furnish a complete publishing history of each, for this inevitably becomes increasingly complex and decreasingly valuable. For example, a letter printed in Shelley and Mary, published in Mrs. Marshall, and quoted by Dowden may then be quoted in a slightly different form by Miss Grylls. The nature of these changes and omissions is the proper study of the editor of these letters, but I am not yet prepared with texts adequate to the task. The scholar who merely wants to know what letters are available and how far he will have to go to consult them will, I hope, find the present index of service.

Letters which have not been seen by any scholar, such as some of those which Claire said in her journals that she had written, have been omitted here. All letters which I have not myself seen are marked N.V. Those of which I have not made complete transcripts are indicated by an asterisk. In identifying the letters by a quotation I have attempted to

avoid the confusion which often arises when several letters to the same person are without date or bear identical dates. The quotations are almost always of the first few words in the manuscript, but sometimes for convenience I have used instead the first few words of the published version. I hope that my forthcoming edition of the letters will remove the necessity for so awkward and unconventional a system of identification.

To	Date	Location	Identification
1. Fanny Godwin	28 May 1815	Abinger MSS.	*Printed*: *Shelley & Mary*, I, 79-81 *Publ*. Dowden, II, 519-521 Marshall, I, 117-119
2. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	Signed "E. Trefusis." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 429 Grylls, *C.C.*, pp. 54-55
3. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	Signed "G.C.B." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 430 Grylls, *C.C.*, pp. 55-56
4. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"There is little in your lordship's stern silence..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 434-435
5. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"I have called twice..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 430-431
6. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"I am extremely obliged..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 431-434
7. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"Pardon my writing..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 434
8. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"You bid me write short..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 435-436 Grylls, *C.C.*, pp. 59-60
9. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"Will you be so kind..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 436
10. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"I write to you thus early..." *Publ*. Prothero, III, 436-437

To	Date	Location	Identification
11. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"Since you disappointed me..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 209-210 (in part)
12. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"If I had not been hurried..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, p. 207 (in part)
13. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"Mary has promised..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, I, 90 (in part) Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 60-61 (in part) Paston & Quennell, p. 207 (in part)
14. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"If amidst your bustle..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., p. 61
15. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"It is not thro selfishness..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, p. 208 (in part)
16. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"Hour after hour..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 61-62
17. Byron	6 May 1816	Murray MSS.	"So far am I on my journey..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 210-212 (in part)
18. Byron	17 May 1816	Murray MSS.	"We arrived here last Monday..." Unprinted and unpublished
19. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"I am sorry you are grown so old..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., p. 64

To	Date	Location	Identification
20. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"How can you be so very unkind..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 64-65
21. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"Pray if you can send Mr. Polidori..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, p. 213 (less than a sentence)
22. Byron	[1816]	Murray MSS.	"I would have come to you..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, p. 213 (in part)
23. Byron	16 July 1816	Murray MSS.	"We go, I believe, in two days..." Paston & Quennell, p. 214 (in part)
24. Byron	[29 August 1816]	Murray MSS.	"When you receive this..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 216-217 (in part) Grylls, C.C., pp. 73-74 (in part) with facsimile of last page
25. Byron	12 September 1816	Murray MSS.	"We had a latter from him today.." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 217-218 (in part)
26. Mary Shelley	[19 September 1816]	Abinger MSS.	"There came yesterday a letter..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, I, 138-139 Publ. Dowden, II, 45-46 (in part)
27. Byron	29 September 1816	Murray MSS.	"and so instead of ₤1000..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 219-222 (in part)

To	Date	Location	Identification
28. Byron	6 October 1816	Murray MSS.	"Oh, noble, mighty, grand..." Publ. Paston & Quennell pp. 222-223 (in part)
29. Byron	27 October, 17,19 November 1816	Murray MSS.	on Fanny Godwin's death Printed: Shelley & Mary, I, 150-151 (in part) Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 77,78 (in part) Paston & Quennell, pp. 223-226 (in part)
30. Byron	12 January 1818	Murray MSS.	"This is my little darling's..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 230-233 (in part)
31. Byron	21 April 1818	Murray MSS.	"Your messenger will remain..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 234-235 (in part)
32. Byron	27 April 1818	Murray MSS.	"By the time you have this..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 236-237
33. Byron	17 May 1818	Murray MSS.	"How is my Allegra?" Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 237-239
34. Mr. Gisborne	[May, 1818]	Abinger MSS.	"We send you Schlegel." (brief note) Unprinted & unpublished
35. Byron	15 May 1819	Murray MSS.	about Mrs. Vavasour's offer Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 241-243 (in part)

To	Date	Location	Identification
36. Mrs. Gisborne	3 June 1819	Bodleian MS Shelley c.1 ff. 292-293	"Mary tells me to write for her..." Publ. Letters of Mary W. Shelley, ed. Jones, I, 72.
37. Mrs. Gisborne	[February, 1820]	Abinger MSS.	"The stupid wretch of a Proccacio..." Unprinted & unpublished
38. Byron	16 March 1820	Murray MSS.	"It is now almost a year..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 244-246
39. Byron	23 April 1820	Murray MSS.	"You may believe me..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, pp. 245-246 (in part)
40. Byron	1 May 1820	Murray MSS.	"but unless we inhabit a city like London together..." Publ. Paston & Quennell, Cornhill Magazine, 150 (Sept., 1934) 269 (in part) Grylls, C.C., p. 123 (in part)
41. Byron	[2 or 4 May 1820]	[Forman MSS.]	"I beg from you the indulgence..." Publ. Dowden, II, 329-330 "from a rough draft in Miss Clairmont's handwriting." Until I have evidence to the contrary I shall assume that the letter quoted in the Forman sales catalogue, II, 35, is part of this letter. N.V.

To	Date	Location	Identification
42. Byron	24 March 1821	British Museum Egerton MSS. 2332, fol. 5	"I have just received the letter..." Publ. Prothero, V, 498-500
43. Mary Shelley	[31 October 1821]	Abinger MSS.	"I arrived last night..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, III, 749-750 Publ. Marshall, I, 310-311
44. Byron	18 February 1822	[Forman MSS.]	"I am sensible how little this letter is calculated to please." Publ. Dowden, II, 486-487 "from a copy in Miss Clairmont's handwriting." N.V.
45. Mary Shelley	9 April 1822	Abinger MSS.	"I suppose you are angry with me..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, III, 776-778
46. Leigh Hunt	[19 July] 1822	British Museum, Ashley 4763	"Mr. Trelawny went to Livorno..." Publ. T.J. Wise, A Shelley Library, pp. 104-105 Marshall, II, 30 etc.
47. Mary Shelley	[13 September 1822]	Abinger MSS.	"You have only been gone..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, III, 903-904 Publ. Marshall, II, 29-30
48. Lady Mountcashell	14 September 1822	Abinger MSS.	"I tried the whole journey..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 165-166 (in part) N.V.

To	Date	Location	Identification
49. Jane Williams	24 October 1822	Abinger MSS.	"I only received the letter..." Unprinted & unpublished
50. Jane Williams	5(16) May 1825	Abinger MSS.	"Excuse me, dearest Jane..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1063-1064
51. Jane Williams	27 October 1825	Abinger MSS.	"It is now so long since I heard..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1066-1074 Publ. Marshall, II, 142-148
52. Mary Shelley	2(14) May 1826	Abinger MSS.	"I received your letter written..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 180-182 (in part)
53. Jane Williams	PM.22 January 1827	Abinger MSS.	"If I have not written..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1084-1091 Publ. Marshall, II, 157-164
54. Jane Williams	14 March 1828	Abinger MSS.	"I do not ask you not to be surprised..." Unprinted & unpublished
55. Mary Shelley	22 July 1828	Abinger MSS.	"You may imagine how surprised..." Unprinted & unpublished
56. Mary Shelley	28 March 1830	Abinger MSS.	"At last I take up the pen..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1124-1128 Publ. Marshall, II, 199-203 Grylls, C.C., p. 196 (in part)

To	Date	Location	Identification
57. Jane Williams	3 April 1830	Abinger MSS.	"How much pleasure your letter..." Unprinted & unpublished
58. Jane Williams	[1830?]	Abinger MSS.	"He is quite right in thinking..." (about Tom Moore Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 196-197 (in part) N.V.
59. Mary Shelley	11 December 1830	Abinger MSS.	"Your last letter, although so melancholy..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, LV, 1133-1137 Publ. Mrs. Marshall, II, 234-238
60. Mary Shelley	13 April 1831	Abinger MSS.	"I have just received..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1144-1145
61. Mary Shelley	5 March 1832	Abinger MSS.	Introduces the Gaskells Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1156-1157
62. Mary Shelley	24 March 1832	Abinger MSS.	"I do not know whether I have written" Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1157-1161 Publ. Marshall, II, 243-244 (in part) Grylls, C.C., 199, 201, 203 (in part)

To	Date	Location	Identification
63. Mary Shelley	26 October, 8 November 1832	Abinger MSS.	"Though your last letter..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1167-1172 Publ. Marshall, II, 249-253 (in part) Grylls, C.C., p. 201 (in part)
64. Jane Williams	1 February 1833	Abinger MSS.	"At last I have heard from you..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1175-1179 Publ. Marshall, II, 248 (in part) Grylls, C.C., pp. 193, 199, 200 (in part)
65. Mary Shelley	25 September 1833	Abinger MSS.	"What a letter is the one..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., p. 143 (in part) See Appendix D, above
66. Mary Shelley	9 March 1834	Abinger MSS.	"Heaven only knows..." Unprinted & unpublished See Appendix D, above
67. Mary Shelley	16 September 1834	Abinger MSS.	"You have been a more frequent..." Unprinted & unpublished
68. Bartolomeo Cini	22 February 1835	Cini MSS.	"Vi ringrazio de core..." Publ. in translation, Grylls, C.C., pp. 284-286
69. Mary Shelley	2 June 1835	Abinger MSS.	"This letter will I fear..." Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
70. Mary Shelley	16 September 1835	Abinger MSS.	"This will be a very hasty letter..." Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1197-1203 Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 218-219 (in part)
*71. Mary Shelley	6 November 1835	Abinger MSS.	description of cholera epidemic Unprinted & unpublished
*72. Mary Shelley	13 February 1836	Abinger MSS.	"I have been having a dull winter..." Unprinted & unpublished
*73. Mary Shelley	15 March 1836	Abinger MSS.	"Mrs. Hare admires Lodore..." Publ. Marshall, II, 265-267 (in part) Grylls, C.C., p. 219 (in part)
*74. Mary Shelley	19 October 1836	Abinger MSS.	"We arrived here only last night." Unprinted and unpublished
75. Percy Florence Shelley	5 January 1838	Abinger MSS.	"Here is a pretty Christmas..." Publ. Grylls, M.S., p. 233 (in part)
*76. Mary Shelley	PM. 7 April 1838	Abinger MSS.	"Now Sir Tim cannot live much longer..." Unprinted & unpublished
*77. Mary Shelley	20 April 1838	Abinger MSS.	"Will you not write to Mrs. Gaskell..." Publ. Grylls, M.S., p. 232 (in part)

To	Date	Location	Identification
*78. Mary Shelley	30 October 1840	Abinger MSS.	"I go by nine to Mrs. Kitchener's ..." *Publ*. Grylls, *M.S.*, pp. 208-209, 253 (in part)
*79. Mary Shelley	23 November 1841	Abinger MSS.	"I have decided to stay in Paris" *Publ*. Grylls, *C.C.*, p. 207 (in part)
*80. Mary Shelley	12 July 1842	Abinger MSS.	Sees no one but Mme. Ivanhoff Unprinted & unpublished
*81. Percy Florence Shelley	23 August 1842	Abinger MSS.	Dina coming to stay with her Unprinted & unpublished
*82. Mary Shelley	PM. 29 November 1842	Abinger MSS.	"My old pupil, Betsy Zotoff..." Unprinted & unpublished
*83. Mary Shelley	PM. 6 April 1843	Abinger MSS.	Hates having her at Amelia Curran's Unprinted & unpublished
*84. Mary Shelley	2 June 1843	Abinger MSS.	Thinks Galloni agent of secret police Unprinted & unpublished
*85. Mary Shelley	17 June 1843	Abinger MSS.	From Hammy & Claire together Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
*86. Mary Shelley	[January ? to] 11 February 1844	Abinger MSS.	Thanks Mary for note from Folkestone and continues on second sheet: "Until yesterday I have not beenout of my house." The second sheet has been treated as a separate letter and printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1229-1231. Publ. Grylls, M.S., p. 233 (in part)
*87. Mary Shelley	18 March 1844	Abinger MSS.	M. Kaiseroff died at Nice Unprinted & unpublished
*88. Mary Shelley	[March 1844]	Abinger MSS.	"Did I tell you General Kaiseroff..." Unprinted & unpublished
89. Mary Shelley	28 April 1844	Abinger MSS.	Sir Tim is dead Printed: Shelley & Mary, IV, 1231-1235 Publ. Grylls, M.S., p. 234 (in part)
*90. Mary Shelley	30 April 1844	Abinger MSS.	"Now you are so rich..." Unprinted & unpublished
*91. Mary Shelley	7 August 1844	Abinger MSS.	Glad Mary is to have £3000 a year Unprinted & unpublished
*92. Mary Shelley	17 August 1844	Abinger MSS.	Match-making between Knox & Natalie Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
*93. Mary Shelley	22 August 1844	Abinger MSS.	On Mary's travel book Unprinted & unpublished
*94. Mary Shelley	16 September 1844	Abinger MSS.	Has been bathing at Dieppe Unprinted & unpublished
*95. Mary Shelley	14 October 1844	Abinger MSS.	"I bless myself every day..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 204-205 (in part)
*96. Mary Shelley	20 November 1844	Abinger MSS.	Nursed by Mme. Ivanhoff Unprinted & unpublished
*97. Mary Shelley	9 December 1844	Abinger MSS.	"My idea is to buy land..." Unprinted & unpublished
*98. Mary Shelley	28 December 1844	Abinger MSS.	Resents being called a "suspicious person" by Mary Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 208-209 (in part)
*99. Mary Shelley	[April] 1845	Abinger MSS.	Introduction for Ada Ramsbottom Unprinted & unpublished
*100. Mary Shelley	7 May 1845	Abinger MSS.	Was truly happy in Putney Unprinted & unpublished
*101. Mary Shelley	12 May 1845	Abinger MSS.	Natalie's marriage may not occur Unprinted & unpublished
*102. Mary Shelley	[May] 1845	Abinger MSS.	"directly I hear from you whether the Opera Box..." Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
*103. Mary Shelley	[May] 1845	Abinger MSS.	"I will certainly buy the Opera Box..." Unprinted & unpublished
*104. Mary Shelley	25 May 1845	Abinger MSS.	Wants the whole box Unprinted & unpublished
*105. Mary Shelley	29 May 1845	Abinger MSS.	"Of course the theatre will burn..." Unprinted & unpublished
*106. Mary Shelley	[1845]	Abinger MSS.	"I received your two letters..." Unprinted & unpublished
*107. Mary Shelley	8 June 1845	Abinger MSS.	If Mary won't have the box, she won't either Unprinted & unpublished
*108. Mary Shelley	26 June 1845	Abinger MSS.	"Pray tell me what railroad shares..." Unprinted & unpublished
*109. Mary Shelley	4 July 1845	Abinger MSS.	Feud between Natalie and her mother Unprinted & unpublished
*110. Mary Shelley	13 July 1845	Abinger MSS.	Percy's threatened jaundice Unprinted & unpublished
*111. Mary Shelley	1 August 1845	Abinger MSS.	Charles in Paris Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
*112. Mary Shelley	9 August 1845	Abinger MSS.	"But he is like me immensely prudent..." Publ. Grylls, M.S., p. 235 (in part)
*113. Mary Shelley	PM. 31 August 1845	Abinger MSS.	"He is not avid of money..." Unprinted & unpublished
*114. Mary Shelley	20 November 1845	Abinger MSS.	"I think Lady Sussex is cracked..." Unprinted & unpublished
*115. Mary Shelley	17 December 1845	Abinger MSS.	"Percy will get into Parliament..." Unprinted & unpublished
*116. Mary Shelley	19 January 1846	Abinger MSS.	"I hope I shall be well in England..." Publ. Grylls, M.S., p. 234 (in part)
*117. Mary Shelley	2 February 1846	Abinger MSS.	Wants Mary to find her a lodging Unprinted & unpublished
*118. Mary Shelley	early 1846	Abinger MSS.	New Year's visit to pay Unprinted & unpublished
119. Tommaso Cini	[31 May] 1847	Cini MSS.	"Quanto dispiacere..." Unprinted & unpublished
120. Tommaso Cini	3 June 1847	Cini MSS.	"Vedo che le vostre tantissime..." Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
121. Tommaso Cini	12 June 1847	Cini MSS.	"Domenica a mezzo giorno..." Unprinted & unpublished
*122. Mary Shelley	1 April 1849	Abinger MSS.	Has not the money to come to Field Place Unprinted & unpublished
*123. Mary Shelley	11 April 1849	Abinger MSS.	Speaks of bringing Cleary to Field Place *Publ*. Grylls, *M.S.*, pp. 235-236 (in part)
*124. Mary Shelley	22 April 1849	Abinger MSS.	May send Cleary down alone *Publ*. Grylls, *M.S.*, p. 235n (in part)
125. Wilhelm Clairmont	10 March 1850	Clairmont MSS.	Describes the Shelley household Unpublished & unprinted
126. Wilhelm Clairmont	[1850 or 1851?]	Clairmont MSS.	Unprinted & unpublished
127. Tonie Clairmont	1 August 1850	Clairmont MSS.	"If I have not written before..." Unprinted & unpublished
128. Bartolomeo Cini	12 July 1851	Cini MSS.	"Mille grazie per la vostra amicizia..." Unprinted & unpublished
129. Pauline Clairmont	PM. 16 March 1852	Clairmont MSS.	"I have had a letter from your Mother..." Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
130. Tonie Clairmont	6 September 1853	Clairmont MSS.	"I write to you again..." Unprinted & unpublished See Appendix E, above
131. Tonie Clairmont	12 May 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"I received an hour ago..." Unprinted & unpublished
132. Tonie Clairmont	31 May 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"I write a few lines..." Unprinted & unpublished
133. Tonie Clairmont	5 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"I have just received your letter" Unprinted & unpublished
134. Tonie Clairmont	12 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"I have just received a letter..." Unprinted & unpublished
*135. Tonie Clairmont	16 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"A Child must take care of a Parent..." Unprinted & unpublished
*136. Tonie Clairmont	21 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"Knox is giddy..." Unprinted & unpublished
*137. Tonie Clairmont	21 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	About mails to Australia Unprinted & unpublished
*138. Tonie Clairmont	23 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	How to send money to Willy Unprinted & unpublished
*139. Tonie Clairmont	28 June 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Dangers of Willy's settling in Hungary permanently Unprinted & unpublished

To	Date	Location	Identification
*140. Tonie Clairmont	5 July 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Has moved to the country Unprinted & unpublished
*141. Tonie Clairmont	12 July 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Prospects of the Opera Box Unprinted & unpublished
*142. Tonie Clairmont	19 July 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"Those whom God loves die young." Unprinted & unpublished
*143. Tonie Clairmont	26 July 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Knox, "a rash hare-brained person." Unprinted & unpublished
*144. Tonie Clairmont	30 July 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Address of convents Unprinted & unpublished
*145. Tonie Clairmont	2 August 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"At 18 I suffered fearfully..." Unprinted & unpublished
*146. Tonie Clairmont	9 August 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"Take warning by my sufferings" Unprinted & unpublished
*147. Tonie Clairmont	16 August 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"Youth is ... one long blunder." Unprinted & unpublished
*148. Tonie Clairmont	23 August 1856	Clairmont MSS.	"I knew that you did not love..." Unprinted & unpublished
*149. Tonie Clairmont	6 September 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Wants no "romantic" match for W. Unprinted & unpublished
*150. Tonie Clairmont	7 September 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Send passage money to Pauline Unprinted & unpublished

	To	Date	Location	Identification
*151.	Tonio Clairmont	13 September 1856	Clairmont MSS.	Denies herself a servant Unprinted & unpublished
152.	Dina Williams Hunt	31 December 1862	U. of Texas	"Here is the last day of the year..." Unprinted & unpublished
153.	Trelawny	25 December 1869	Forman MSS.	"I am troubled by circumstances ..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 212-213 (in part) N.V.
154.	Trelawny	[c. 1870]	Forman MSS.	"Before we parted at Geneva..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 262-264 (in part) N.V.
155.	Trelawny	[c. 1870]	Forman MSS.	"Shelley as you know adored Genius..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., p. 264 (in part) N.V.
156.	Trelawny	[c. March 1870]	Forman MSS.	"I have read two articles..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 264-268 (in part) N.V.
157.	Trelawny	[c. 1870]	Forman MSS.	"Bagnacavallo did not depend..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., p. 268 (in part) N.V.
158.	Trelawny	[c. 1870]	Forman MSS.	"One of Byron's principles..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 67-68, 268-269 (in part) N.V.

To	Date	Location	Identification
159. Trelawny	[c. 1870]	Forman MSS.	"none knew the secret..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., p. 269 (in part) N.V.
160. Trelawny	[c. 1870]	Forman MSS.	"You state that the elopement..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 269-271 (in part) N.V.
161. Trelawny	26 December 1870	Forman MSS.	"I can at least tell you..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 271-272 (in part) N.V.
162. Trelawny	[?]	Forman MSS.	Note on Shelley's letter of 30 Dec. 1816 Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 272-275 N.V.
163. Bartolomeo Cini	27 February to 2 March 1875	Cini MSS.	"I thank you from my heart..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 287-288 (begins in the middle at "but when your wound.")
164. Bartolomeo Cini	11 August 1876	Cini MSS.	"I am so sorry to have given you..." Publ. Grylls, C.C., pp. 286-287 (In part; from the beginning down to "but when your wound.")
165. Bartolomeo Cini	12 August [1876]	Cini MSS.	"I write only a line..." Unprinted and unpublished

	To	Date	Location	Identification
166.	Bartolomeo Cini	4 September 1876	Cini MSS.	"I am very weak and shaky..." Unprinted & unpublished
167.	Wilhelm Clairmont	2,4 January 1879	Clairmont MSS.	"Yours was such a delightful dear letter..." Unprinted & unpublished

Appendix K

"A FRAGMENT--"

The following sketch, apparently the beginning of a short story, is to be found in the British Museum among papers relating to the Shelley circle.[1] It was thought by Richard Garnett to be in Claire Clairmont's handwriting, and a careful comparison of the penmanship with that in Claire's journals has convinced me that this is probably true.[2] In an attempt to date the fragment I noticed that the forms of the letters *r* and *x* used in it begin to appear in Claire's handwriting in the 1820 journals. The characters of Ianthe and Edward suggest Jane and Edward Williams, as Alastor and Marian seem to be based on Shelley and Mary. The Williams family occupied the villa of the Marchese Poschi in Pugnano during the summer

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[1] Add. MS. 43805.

[2] Garnett to a Mr. Williams, 8 November 1900.

and autumn of 1821, and Claire stayed with them there in October. Edward Williams' description of the villa and its setting makes it reasonably clear that this was the basis of "A fragment--":

> . . . with Shelley for a companion, I promise myself a great deal of pleasure, sauntering in the shady retreats of the olive and ches t nut woods that grow above our heads up the hill sides. He has a small boat building, only ten or twelve feet long, to go adventuring, as he calls it.[3]

If the above assumptions are justified, the little piece illustrates Claire's method, later employed in "The Pole," to draw upon the members of her circle for the characters of her fiction.

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[3] Maria Gisborne and Edward E. Williams, p. 158. The passage is in a letter from Williams to Trelawny, dated April, 1821.

A fragment--

Ianthe sat alone and desolate in her deserted bower--her face leaned upon her hand and her eyes were bent to the earth whose flowers woo'ed her in vain with their sweetness: she gazed but on the beautiful scene around her a mist seemed to overshadow it altho' the Sun's last rays glittered on the panes of her own bright home and the deep was so clear it seemed that one might penetrate immensity. she took up her guitar but and struck a few chords but tears followed their vibrations. she called on him but he answered not! so swiftly the wild waves bore him away. There was a rock sheltered by a single tree whose ample branches gave a welcome shade; stretched beneath this she would oftimes watch their little bark as it sped across the bay now hoping now despairing as its veering course bore them towards or from their home. thither now she went full of sad thoughts for the light of her life had fled and she knew that many suns must rise and set ere they shoud watch his departing beams together. But who was the light of her life? and why had he fled, did his frail bark ever return? You shall hear--Edward was the Idol of his Ianthe from him she first learnt the mysteries of that divine love that filled her whole being with its essence and to her seemed to diffuse into all things a portion of its own exquisite loveliness. Her only wish was immortality for her golden dreams were realized; the object of her soul's worship was beside her. The fruit of his love was at her feet their paradise was fair Italy their

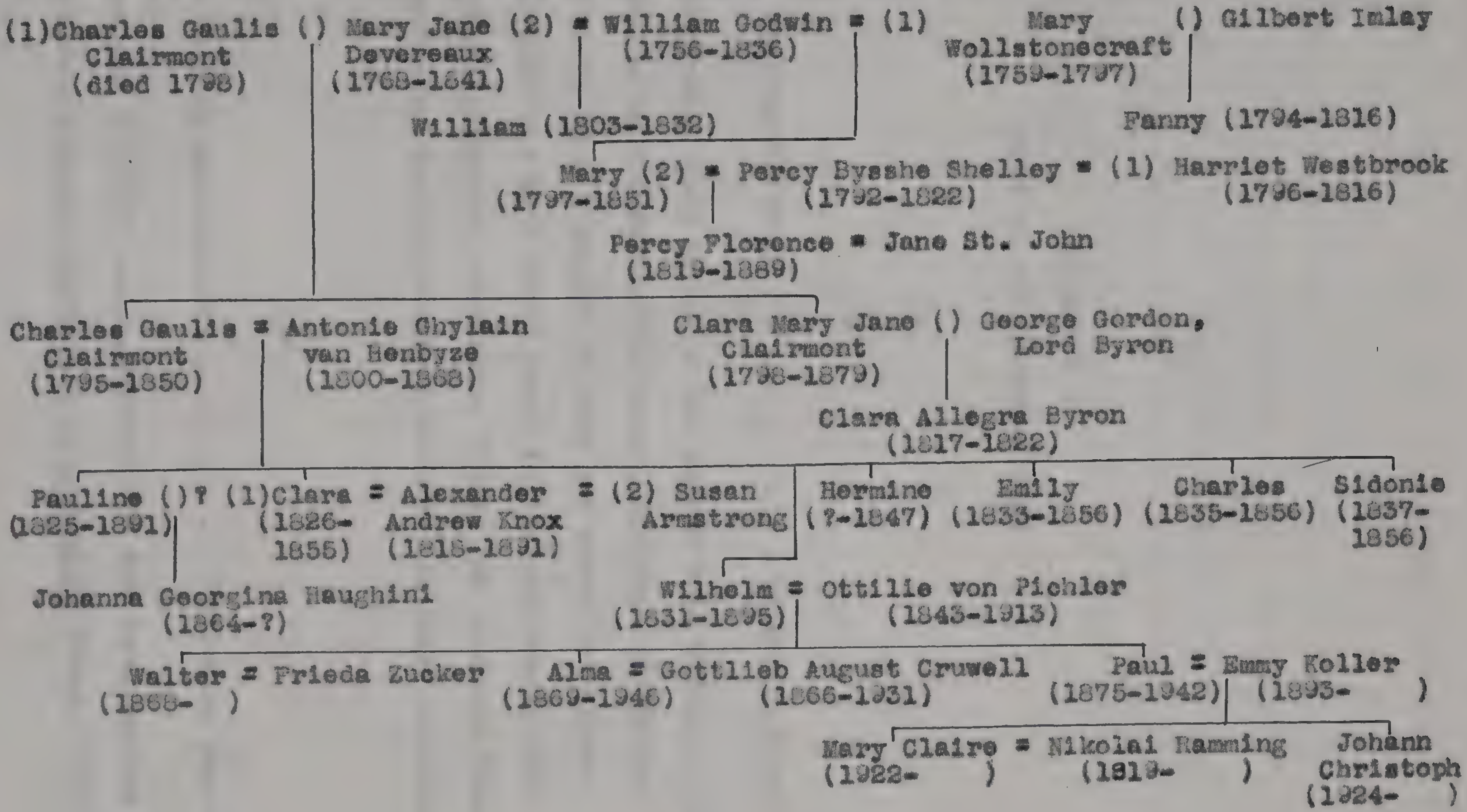
home at the foot of the wild Appenines--Ianthe (whose light form seemed upborne by her lighter spirit) loved to climb their precipitous sides and garlanding her head with wild flowers she sped along like youth pursued by hope & love the happy genius of that sweet solitude. Her favorite spot was one of difficult access whose pathway up the steep mountain's side wound thro' tangled thickets where the loose gravel scarcely gave a resting place to her daring feet but well did its loveliness repay her toil. Above her head the mountain summits were clad with intermingled foliage from the darkest pine to the bright chesnut At her feet the myrtle shed its odorous blossoms To the right old Towers clad[?] the mountain tops whose thick walls elegance[?] stand in proud defiance to time and tyranny. The smoothe and trea[c]herous sea rolled in the distance streaking the horizon with a bright silvery line while the intermediate plain glowing with luxuriant profusion gave to the eye every variety of tint--The wandering Serchio with its many windings flowed silently along and here and there gleamed the white cottages of the happy peasants Ianthe gazed on these scenes and thought of her own unequalled happiness till her heart seemed too small for the many feelings centred there and she felt as if she should die of this very excess. "What am I" she would say "Oh thou bountiful giver of all that is good and lovely what am I that thou shouldst have made my destiny thy peculiar care? thou hast given me a heart to feel, adore, and worship the divinity of love and an object who will

receive and return my offerings/ Thou hast imbued me with a deep sense of the loveliness of creation of the beauty and order of the universe and in this divine country I can enjoy with those I love a life of innocence and peace" then casting her eyes towards her home she saw her beloved garden in all its flowering pride her arbour twined with many a sweet plant that beloved form stretched on the grass in merry sport with his babes: she gazed on the scene for a moment and the thought passed across her, "What if her were not!" swift as lightening she descended nor paused till she folded him in her arms while he laughing at her vision would dry her tears with a kiss--There were two dear friends whose prescence shed delight and gladness in the halls of Pugnano Alastor and his Marian. She was delicately fair and "beautiful in her young wisdom" and her warm and vivid imagination decked all things with its own bright hues. while on her expansive brow sat reason triumphant over youth

Appendix L

GENEALOGICAL TABLE

Based on Herbert Huscher, *Charles und Claire Clairmont*, p. 57 and original sources.


(1)Charles Gaulis Clairmont (died 1798) () Mary Jane (2) = William Godwin = (1) Mary Wollstonecraft () Gilbert Imlay
Mary Jane Devereaux (1768-1841)
William Godwin (1756-1836)
Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)
William (1803-1832)
Fanny (1794-1816)
Mary (2) = Percy Bysshe Shelley = (1) Harriet Westbrook
Mary (1797-1851)
Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)
Harriet Westbrook (1796-1816)
Percy Florence = Jane St. John
Percy Florence (1819-1889)
Charles Gaulis Clairmont (1795-1850) = Antonie Ghylain van Benbyze (1800-1868)
Clara Mary Jane Clairmont (1798-1879) () George Gordon, Lord Byron
Clara Allegra Byron (1817-1822)
Pauline (1825-1891) ()?
(1)Clara (1826-1855) = Alexander Andrew Knox (1818-1891) = (2) Susan Armstrong
Hermine (?-1847)
Emily (1833-1856)
Charles (1835-1856)
Sidonie (1837-1856)
Johanna Georgina Haughini (1864-?)
Wilhelm (1831-1895) = Ottilie von Pichler (1843-1913)
Walter (1868-) = Frieda Zucker
Alma (1869-1946) = Gottlieb August Cruwell (1866-1931)
Paul (1875-1942) = Emmy Koller (1893-)
Mary Claire (1922-) = Nikolai Ramming (1819-)
Johann Christoph (1924-)

Appendix M

NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

i

Mary Jane Clairmont Godwin . . . . Following page 6

This portrait, said to be of the second Mrs. Godwin, is in the possession of Dr. Walter Clairmont, Gauting-bei-München, Germany. It is 3½ x 4 inches in size and shows the sitter with black hair and dark brown eyes, in a brown dress, with bows of bright blue with chartreuse lines. No positive identification beyond that of family tradition has been possible.

ii

Shelley's Italian acquaintance . . . . Following page 107

1. Marianna Dionigi, self-portrait, is the frontispiece to Nicola Marcone, Marianna Dionigi e le sue Opere (Roma, 1896).

2. Tommaso Sgricci in 1824, artist unknown, is reproduced from Ugo Viviani, Un Genio Aretino: Tommaso Sgricci, Poeta tragica improvvisatore (Arezzo, 1928), Tavola I.

3. Francesco Pacchiani, by Martini, is reproduced from Enrica Viviani della Robbia, Vita di Una Donna (Firenze, 1936).

4. Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri, from a bust by Paolo Folini, is reproduced from Laura Vaccà Giusti, Andrea Vaccà e la sua Famiglie (Pisa, 1878), facing page 45.

iii

Charles Gaulis Clairmont . . . . Following page 135

This portrait, from a photographic copy in the possession of Rosalie Glynn Grylls, was found by Professor Herbert Huscher when he was billeted during the war in the Vienna home of Charles Clairmont's grand-daughter, Frau Alma Crüwell-Clairmont. He had the photograph made at the time; the portrait itself has since disappeared, either sent into "safe-keeping" by Frau Crüwell-Clairmont before her death in 1946 or destroyed in the bombing of her flat.

iv

Claire Clairmont . . . . Following page 157

Family tradition has preserved this as a portrait of "Aunt

Claire." It is now in the possession of Dr. Walter Clairmont. Professor Huscher examined this portrait when he was in Vienna and described it as "das farbige Porträt einer alten Dame mit blondgelocktem Haar und blauen Augen, das wahrscheinlich die Mutter der beiden Geschwister, Mrs. Mary Jane Godwin, darstellt."[1] The portrait does indeed show a woman with blue eyes, but the hair is not actually blonde, but of a vague sort of medium brown. She is wearing a black cape, a grey dress, and a white lace cap and collar.

The portrait as a whole measures 7 x 9 inches and includes (in addition to the details in the photographic reproduction) a table at the sitter's right, holding a vase of pink and blue flowers and an inkstand with two pens in it, and outside the window, a hill with a square tower at the summit. The similarity in composition and "properties" to "The North-West Passage" by Sir John Millais--the painting in which Trelawny served as model--is striking.[2] The window with the venetian blind, the boat outside, the vase of flowers, the painting above the sitter's head, the book, the position of the sitter in the chair, the far-away meditative expression--all are remarkably similar. The major difference is in the style. Instead of the firm, clean, realistic line of the Millais painting, the Clairmont

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[1] Herbert Huscher, _op_. _cit_., p. 55n.

[2] For a reproduction of this painting see Grylls, _Trelawny_, facing p. 226.

portrait has a softened, dreamy style. The baroque curlicue beside the window is reflected in the unrealistic, stylized line of the vase. This difference might suggest that the Clairmont portrait was a copy of an earlier portrait, perhaps of a sketch or a drawing or a completed portrait in poor condition. That such a portrait did exist is known from a letter from Pauline Clairmont to Henry Buxton Forman, written on 22 May 1887: "Of my Aunt's picture I am sorry to say I can give no satisfactory account. It disappeared from among my things on leaving Italy--& was even then in bad condition."[3] It is known that some of the things which Pauline thought were lost later turned up (viz. the copies of Mrs. Godwin's letters to Lady Mountcashell). Perhaps when the picture was found, in poor condition, it was cleaned up or copied; certainly the present portrait is in sound condition.

On my examination of this portrait I was most struck by the close resemblance of its subject to the portrait of Claire by Amelia Curran, now, according to Miss Grylls, at Newstead Abbey.[4] I reasoned also that Frau Crüwell-Clairmont and Dr. Walter Clairmont ought to be fairly trusted in the identification, since both knew Claire, the former being ten and the

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[3] Berg MSS.

[4] The two portraits should be compared. Cave! The best reproduction of Miss Curran's portrait is in Grylls, Claire Clairmont, facing p. 130. The commonly reproduced copy by Emory Price is vastly inferior.

latter eleven at her death. Although this in itself would be inadequate evidence, by a process of eliminating all the other members of the family of that approximate age whom they would surely have recognized, one is left only with their grandmother, Tonie Clairmont, whom neither of them knew. Since the boat, the book, and the inkstand would have been entirely out of character for this good Austrian hausfrau, Claire seems on this score to be the one logical candidate. On the basis of this evidence I wrote to Professor Huscher, then at the University of Rostock, and received the following reply:

> I have at once consulted my friend and colleague for history of art, Prof. Suter about the identification and dating of the two portraits. We have come to the conclusion that 'das farbige Porträt einer alten Dame mit blondgelocktem Haar und blauen Augen' may well represent Claire Clairmont for the following reasons:
>
> 1) There is a distinct resemblance to Amelia Curran's portrait, especially in the slightly unusual, rather wide apart between the eyes (roughly resembling a triangle),
>
> 2) The dress is distinctly 'Biedermeier', which would point to a date between 1850 and 1860, and this would fit in well with Claire's age, for the lady represented here seems to be in her early fifties--on second thoughts she is not quite 'eine alte Dame' yet, her dress makes her appear much older!
>
> 3) On Amelia Curran's portrait the nose seems to be slightly conventionalized in accordance with classical Greek standards then in fashion so that this divergence between the two portraits is not of great moment.
>
> 4) The colour of the eyes and of the hair, of course, can only be correct in Miss Curran's picture for in Glynn Gryll's 'Mary Shelley', page 25, it says: 'so dark that the pupils of her eyes were not distinguishable from the iris, with thick black hair and an olive complexion', and in a footnote to the page a Miss Leglese is mentioned as a possible ancestor of Portugese blood. But as Prof. Suter tells me, water colour pictures were seldom made from life, only the drawings were that served as a base. Hence errors frequently arose. He gave me two examples

> although they belong to the time of the Renaissance and refer to oil paintings: Francesco Francia once painted the portrait of Isabella D'Este. Though it was a masterpiece, she returned it because her eyes were of a quite different colour. But he refused to alter them in accordance with her request because such an alteration would have spoilt the whole expression as conceived by the imagination of the artist. Similarly the portrait of King Henry VII in the National Portrait Gallery shows different colours of eyes and hair from what we have to expect according to the description by Sir Thomas More. Still, I must confess, it does remain a puzzle how a painter could forget those jet-black eyes. Or were painter and draftsman two different persons? Did Dr. Clairmont say that according to the family tradition it was Claire? Frau Cruwell did, as far as I remember, although she personally thought it impossible because of the divergence in colour.[5]

The colour of the hair and eyes is, indeed, the chief point of difficulty in the absolute identification of the portrait. Professor Huscher's main objections can, however, be somewhat tempered. In turning to Miss Grylls' description he has gone to a fictionalized account based on a second-hand description. There is no contemporary source for this word-portrait. It has been drawn instead from Mrs. Marshall's invented sketch. To what was known on good authority, Mrs. Marshall added:

> Fill in *the few details wanting* [italics are mine], the flat, sleek, black hair,--eyes so black that the pupil was hardly to be distinguished from the iris (eyes which seemed unmistakably to indicate an admixture of Portugese, if not of African, blood in her descent),--a complexion which may in girlhood have been alive, but in later life was sallow,--features not beautiful, and depending on expression for any charm they might have,--and she stands before the reader, the unmanageable, amusing, runaway schoolgirl.[6]

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[5] From a letter dated 23 March 1949.

[6] *Op. cit.*, II, 141-142.

One glance at Amelia Curran's portrait shows that Claire's hair was anything but "flat" and "sleek." The story about the Portugese ancestry was founded on a note in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1733: "August, married Mr. Clairmont a Portugal Merchant to Miss Leglese, daughter of a noted Wine Merchant."[7] Not only was there no proof that "Portugal Merchant" meant "Portugese merchant," but no connection has ever been established between this 1733 Clairmont and Claire's family. All of the evidence suggests French or Swiss extraction and a migration to England at a later date than 1733.[8] Thus two main objections are over-ruled.

Since we know from the Curran portrait that Claire did have dark hair and eyes, the major portion of the problem still remains. If the later picture is a copy of an earlier portrait, as has been suggested, the discrepancy is understandable. If, as Professor Huscher suggests, the draftsman and the watercolorist were two different people, again the explanation is reasonable. A third possibility is that the artist, portraying a brunette whose hair was just turning white, might have chosen the equivocal medium coloring in this portrait as a flattering impressionistic middle way. Of the three, I find the first possibility the most plausible.

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[7] Grylls, Mary Shelley, p. 25n.

[8] See above, pp. 5 - 6 . Dr. Clairmont has informed me that Claire was correct in tracing her ancestry to Switzerland.

v

Pauline Clairmont. . . . . Following page 177

This is a photograph of Pauline Clairmont, "Aunt Plin," about three inches in diameter, in the possession of Dr. Walter Clairmont. It is entirely authenticated, as the subject was well known to Dr. Clairmont.

vi

Margaret, Countess Mountcashell. . . . . . . Following page 344

This portrait was used by Michael Sadleir as an illustration of his edition of Catherine Wilmot's An Irish Peer on the Continent (London, 1920). I have been informed by Dr. Edward McAleer that Sadleir was never able to establish proof that the portrait was of Lady Mountcashell, but based his opinion on family tradition. I have had no reason to doubt the validity of this tradition.

vii

Edward A. Silsbee. . . . . Following page 189

This charcoal drawing by John Singer Sargent was made in 1899, in the last year of the Yankee sea captain's life, and twenty years after his association with Pauline and Claire.

It seems, nevertheless, to recall the qualities which reminded those who knew him of Trelawny. The spirit of the stormy old Shelley-worshiper appears to have been caught very felicitiously by the crayon of the American artist. The original from which this photograph was made is in the Bodleian Library.

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BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on 4 June 1922, the oldest child of William Frank and Louise Anne Kingston. I was reared in Melrose, Massachusetts, and in 1939 graduated from Melrose High School.

In 1943 I graduated from Mount Holyoke College, with an A.B. degree, *magna cum laude*. From September 1943 to May 1946 I was enrolled in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in Duke University, holding for the first two years of my residence Graduate Assistantships in English, for the year 1944-1945 the Class of 1905 Fellowship from Mount Holyoke College, and for the last year of my residence (1945-1946) a Duke University Fellowship in English.

From 1946 to 1948 I was a member of the Department of English at the University of Maine, in Orono. In 1948 I received the Pennsylvania-Delaware Fellowship of the American Association of University Women and spent the following two years in research on Claire Clairmont and related subjects, largely in England and on the Continent. In September 1950 I joined the Department of English and Speech of the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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